

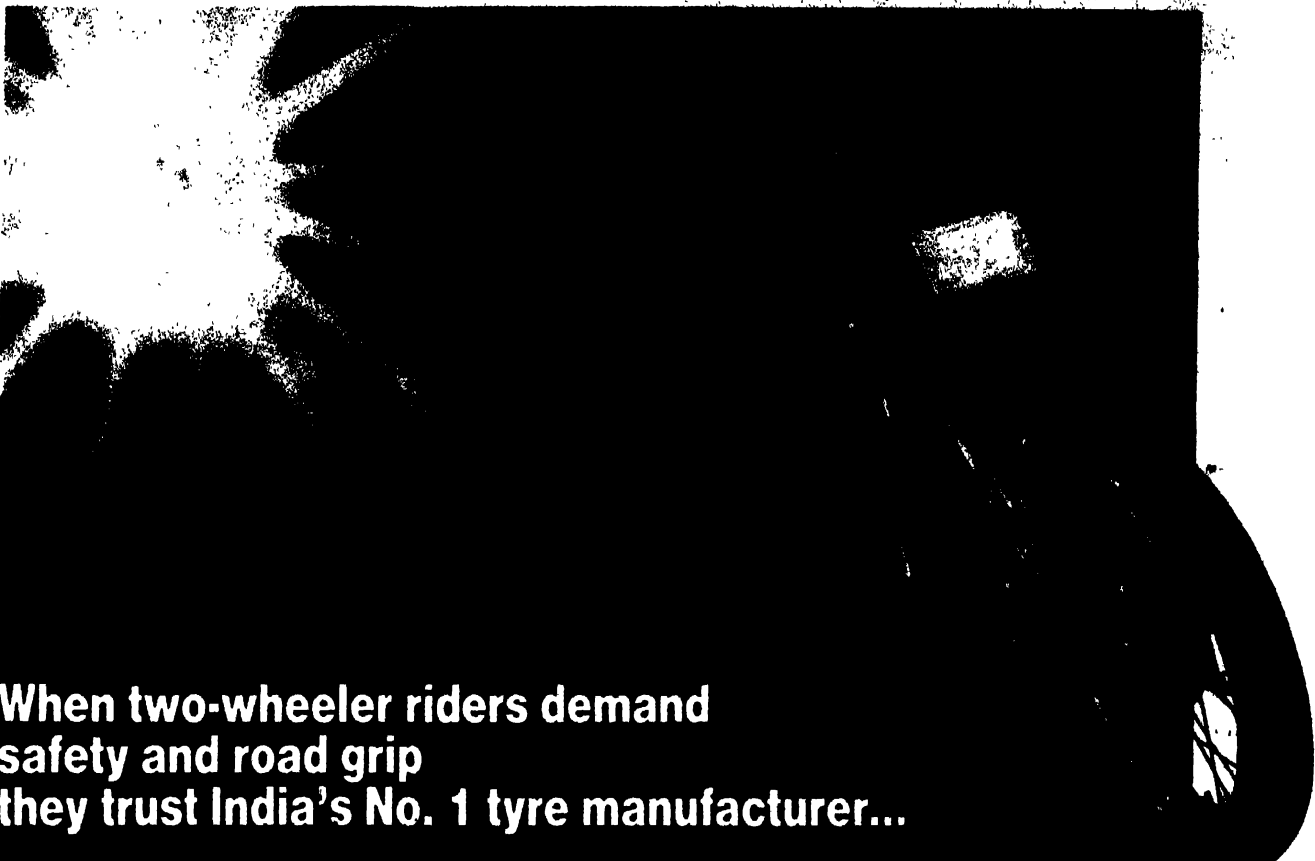
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SUNDAY

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With *Ganashatru*, Satyajit Ray returns to form after five years. Raghbir Singh captures the making of the masterpiece.



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SUNDAY



THE GREAT SURVIVORS

The PM's men

The cover story was interesting (*The great survivors*, 4—10 June). However, what one fails to understand is why Rajiv Gandhi has such implicit faith in Buta Singh and R.K. Dhawan—especially since the rest of the country does not seem to think they are de-



R.K. Dhawan: trusted aide

pendable. While Buta Singh as home minister has failed to maintain peace and harmony in the states, R.K. Dhawan has no credentials to his name, except the sobriquet of 'Mrs Gandhi's trusted aide'. The two have yet to prove that the PM's faith in them was not unwarranted.

Bhupen Bose, Jamshedpur (Bihar)

■ Rajiv Gandhi has always ended up trusting those who the rest of the nation looked at with suspicion. While newspapers flashed reports that D. D. Joshi was probably associated with the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the PM seemed to ignore



Buta Singh: no credit

them, secure in the belief that his mother's trusted loyalist would also serve him in good stead. Buta Singh and R.K. Dhawan may not be the epitomes of virtue, but then, Rajiv must have his own reasons for trusting them.

R.K. Gulati, Siliguri (West Bengal)

Health first

This refers to your article on healthcare (*The merchants of life*, 9—15 April). You have said that neither I nor my company (TTK Pharma) "can claim exclusive membership of the Honest Drug Manufacturers' Club for the simple reason that if you are in the business to make money, you will try your best to do so with whatever it takes to do it".

I am proud to say that I belong to a company which may be in the business to make money, but certainly not by any means. The drug formulations maintained at TTK Pharma are aimed at meeting genuine curative needs of the ailing rather than merely filling our coffers.

K.A. Narandranath, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

Politics now

Mud-slinging in politics has risen to dizzy heights (*Mister Machiavelli*, 23—29 April). In the history of politics, there are innumerable instances of leaders falling out over issues, but there seldom has been the kind of petty fogging that

is now the order of the day. However, I disagree with the author when he says that Arun Nehru is a "legendary" figure in politics, simply because the performances of such leaders fall short of the requirements to be great men.

Rajiv Gandhi has undoubtedly erred in trusting Arun Nehru, V.P. Singh and Arif Mohammad Khan. Matters turned for the worse when the PM unceremoniously dismissed R.K. Dhawan, Mrs Gandhi's



Arun Nehru: elevated

trusted aide. Now that Dhawan is back in favour, perhaps the tides of fortune will once again swing in Rajiv's favour.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Law of the land

The article was interesting (*Our laws, their laws*, 7—13 May). However, I failed to understand why the people of Sikkim are so resentful about laws that are being followed by the whole country. Section 1 of the

Shops closed in Gangtok: protesting against tax laws



Income Tax Act lays down that the Act is applicable to the people of India, and since Sikkim is a part of the country, it follows naturally that the Act applies to that state too. With due respect to the people of Sikkim, I would say that it would be prudent on their part to fall in line with citizens in the rest of the country. It is for the people of India to abide by all laws and regulations in order to enable the nation to move forward.

Prem K. Menon, Bombay (Maharashtra)

In disguise

After reading the article (*A new image for the PM*, 28 May—3 June), I have come to the conclusion that the Rajiv Gandhi-worshipper and V.P. Singh-hater, K.K. Tewari, is now a columnist in your magazine under the pseudonym Udayan Sharma.

Netaji Roy, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Party first

Your report on the race for party nomination for the Calcutta North West parliamentary constituency came as a big surprise (*Up for grabs*, 28 May—3 June). The report is likely to create the impression that anybody and everybody can be an aspirant for a seat that is perhaps the most prestigious in the whole of West Bengal. In fact, I had sent an appeal to the Prime Minister to

stand from this Calcutta constituency along with Amethi. I repeated the request through Mrs Sheila Dixit because Rajiv Gandhi's candidature from this Lok Sabha seat would help generate a new wave of enthusiasm among Congress workers in West Bengal. As a true Congressman, my party comes before my personal ambition, and there is no question of my wanting to grab the nomination for this seat.

Prafulla Kanti Ghosh, Calcutta (West Bengal)

The Speaker too!

Balram Jakhar's alleged involvement in the fodder scandal is not just a blow to the ruling party but to the



Balram Jakhar: In the dock very traditions of Indian democracy and the august post of Speaker that he occupies (*Jakhar in the pack*, 14—20 May). The heat and dust generated by the scandal have still to settle, and Jakhar would do well to step down till the clouds of suspicion have been cleared.

Kalicharan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Belittling the army

While talking about the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka, the author does not clearly specify the role assigned to this force, nor the extent to which it has successfully achieved its objectives (*Coming Home*,



The IPKF in Sri Lanka: commendable effort

14—20 May). Shortly after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord in July 1987, the first batches of the IPKF were sent to the island with the initial objective of assisting that country in curbing the orgy of violence that was then raging in the northern and eastern provinces of the island. Subsequently, the IPKF was required to oversee and ensure fair and peaceful conduct of the provincial elections in those areas. These two objectives of the accord have been largely achieved.

Your correspondent also asserts, and I quote: "It (the Indian army) has told the policy-makers in Delhi's South Block that it wants out. And it is getting its way." Surely, you must be aware of the fact that in a democracy, the duly elected civilian government tells the army what it must do and not vice versa. Your article

further states: "Scratch an army officer and the chances are he will turn out to be a virulent opponent of India's Sri Lanka policy." And yet, on a preceding page you have printed the photograph of a young IPKF captain and quoted him as saying: "I have been shot twice... I don't mind getting a third bullet."

This hardly echoes the sentiments of an officer "virulently opposed" to India's Sri Lanka policy, and much less of one who "wants out"!

In both tone and content, your report makes dismal reading. And it does a grave injustice to our soldiers who are fighting a deadly war in the jungles of Sri Lanka. These are our countrymen. Surely, the very least we can do is to praise their efforts, extol their courage and assure them that we are with them—all the way.

Brigadier (Retd) H. Chakraborty, Wellington (Tamil Nadu)

Correction

Your correspondent has made a mistake in the name of our vice-president in Toronto (*When East is West*, 21—27 May). The name should have read Deepa Saltzman and not Deepak Saltzman. Moreover, Mrs Saltzman has the production rights on behalf of our firm, Sunrise Films Ltd, and not Surrie Films.

S.K. Mehta, Sunrise Films Ltd, New Delhi

Working wonders

Sam Pitroda has proved himself to be the undisputed leader of telecommunications in the country (*The comeback man*, 28 May—3 June). India will always remain indebted to Pit-



Sam Pitroda: for the masses rodra for the 128-line Rural Automatic Exchange. Besides, the telecom czar's association with projects like the adult literacy programme, immunisation drive, and the distribution of water and electricity in rural areas will no doubt work wonders for the uplift of the rural masses in India.

J.V. Nalk, Bombay (Maharashtra)

Check facts

In his haste to denounce Ramakrishna Hegde, Udayan Sharma has made a factual error in his column (*Hegde's track record*, 21—27 May). Hegde was never defeated in the Assembly polls, whether in 1972 or 1978.

Ramanand Sharma, Bangalore (Karnataka)

SUNDAY

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R. K. LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA

While the poor people are suffering because of a total breakdown of law and order in the state, Viswamitra is dancing with Menaka.

RAJIV GANDHI, Prime Minister, on N.T. Rama Rao's magnum opus Viswamitra

As long as Rajiv Gandhi remains in power, the bloodshed in Punjab will not come to an end. The flames will rise higher.

RAM JETHMALANI, Janata Dal leader

I think it's a very healthy thing for a politician to want to be Prime Minister. I think any politician who admits that he is a politician and denies that he wants to be a Prime Minister is a hypocrite.

SHARAD JOSHI, Shetkari Sanghatana leader

Mr Buta Singh ta hamro lagi devta barabar ho (to us Buta Singh is like God).

SUBASH GHISINGH, GNLF leader

If he (Rajiv Gandhi) is so confident of winning the Karnataka elections, why doesn't he hold them in time?

S.R. BOMMAL, former Karnataka chief minister

I am prepared to take the matter to the streets. Insulting Hindi will have far more serious repercussions than insulting or changing about a dozen Congress(I) chief ministers.

DR RATNAKAR PANDEY, member of the parliamentary committee on Hindi, on the decision to cancel the committee members' trip abroad

I think the *Post* is a very fine newspaper, run very efficiently by Mr Vinod Mehta and his talented team of journalists. So I felt that instead of any stray journalist picking it up, it was better that we did it.

PRITISH NANDY, editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and publishing director of *The Times of India* group, on why he bid for *The Indian Post*

As for poor V.P. Singh, Arun Nehru is taking him for a piggy ride as he did with Rajiv.

RUSSY KARANJIA, journalist

Of course, I am underworked, and I am not being fully utilised. I spend my time reading and writing. After all, they also serve who stand and wait.

PRANAB MUKHERJEE, Congress party member

If there's a traffic violation, for instance, they (women) may challenge the culprit immediately, but are less likely to use four-letter words or ill-treat a defaulter.

VIJAY KARAN SINGH, Delhi's police commissioner, on the women police force

I constantly seek equality. If the man in my life has the power to slap me, then even I should be able to slap him back.

FARHA, film star

The seeker's path



Often it is a tragedy that shakes a person out of his complacent take-life-as-it-comes attitude to ask himself what it is all about. Sudhakar Dikshit, author

of *The Republic of Pomipapur*, turned to religion early in life but largely as a publisher of books on Buddhism and the works of Jiddu Krishnamurthi. He prospered, opened a bookstore, Chetana, and a vegetarian restaurant. He had a clutch of healthy, good-looking children including the ravishing beauty Chhaya, wife of the photographer, Jitendra Arya. Everything was going well for him till tragedy struck in quick succession. Four years ago his wife and companion of 50 years suddenly died. A year later a 40-year-old son succumbed to a heart attack. "I had known death before, but never before did it hurt me so deeply and never before has it made me stand face to face with the fundamental problems of being, the enigma of birth and death," writes Dikshit. He asked himself, "These departed dear ones of mine surely existed somewhere before their birth; so also they must be existing somewhere after their death. But where?"

The result of the four-year-old quest is contained in his latest publication, *I am all: A cosmic vision of man* (Chetana). The book, he maintains, was unplanned; it just happened to get written. "Though written by my hand, they (the words) are not mine." It is the pilgrim's path towards detachment and desirelessness. "I have no desire to perpetuate myself in any way, nor do I have any deep attachment for anybody or anything... I have no ambitions, no regrets, no sorrows. I am at a stage of life when desire ceases to be an imprisoning power and one begins to live freely more and more at the centre of one's existence..."

Dikshit accepts the Hindu view of the origin of the cosmos. It is self-created: "Even as a spider sends forth and withdraws its thread, even as plants spring out of the earth, and hairs grow from the head and the body of living man—even so does the whole creation

arise out of the imperishable."
(Mandaka Upanishad)

It is not easy for a sceptic to accept such theorisation or for a rationalist to throw up his hands because the Rig Veda says that the mystery of creation transcends all categories of knowledge. What are we to make of assertions like "Brahman is not the creator but creation itself. Brahman is the causeless cause of all causes"? Or Pascal's, "It is a circle the centre of which is everywhere and the circumference nowhere?"

We go on to more abstract concepts. Time is God. "Kalapurusha is the primordial incarnation of the Brahman as the manifested cosmos." There are three basic attributes necessary for carrying out the functions of creation—*tapas* (ardour), *rita* (order) and *satya* (truth). An agnostic is put out of court when told that the mystery of the existence of Kalapurusha is not an empirical fact, but an inner experience." Dikshit believes in astrology as a science. His thesis is replete with scientific terminology but neither his assumptions nor his conclusions appear scientific.

Soul and *atma* are not scientific concepts. You may, if you like, dismiss the world as *maya*—illusion. But to state categorically that death is not dissolution but a stage in an endless continuity is unwarranted.

Dikshit is on stronger ground when he treads the much-trodden path towards conquest of the self to achieve a viable equation with life as it is. Ego is the source of craving for worldly things: "The mind that accumulates, whether knowledge, money or experience is not living," said Krishnamurthi. What then is living? Apparently total detachment, total desirelessness, total imperviousness towards the ups and downs of life,

Dikshit has "no ambitions, no regrets, no sorrows". He remarks, "I am at a stage of life when desire ceases to be an imprisoning power"

triumphs and failures, joys and sorrows, is the prescribed goal. Then you become godlike and indeed achieve godhood. To wit Adi Sankaracharya:

"I am neither mind, nor intellect, nor ego,
I am neither ears, nor nose, nor eyes,
I am neither space, nor earth, nor fire, nor air,
I am He. I am He."

Dikshit recommends meditation, *pranayama* (breath control), *satsang* (association with saintly persons) and *samta* (equanimity). These help to create desirelessness, egolessness and the spirit of renunciation. The author has evidently achieved these aims and now leads a wholly fulfilled life. In his own words he says:

"I am at a stage of life when desire ceases to be an imprisoning power and one begins to live freely, more and more at the centre of one's existence, than at the circumference; when one begins to care less about what may happen to oneself and increasingly thinks and feels and acts for causes beyond one's ordinary reach. At this stage one often has the feeling of becoming a cosmic being, even though the earthly individuality continues as one's physical entity. It is a stage when at certain moments human consciousness seems to become one with the universal consciousness."

I am all is a compendium of the Hindu philosophic view of life and its purpose. There is nothing startlingly new in what Dikshit says but what he says is lucidly and beautifully said with apt quotations from the sacred texts. Equally readable is M. V. Kamath's foreword. He has a very pertinent quote from William Butler Yeats entitled, *What Then?*

"All his happier dreams came true
A small old house, wife, daughter,
son,
Grounds where plum and cabbage
grew
Poets and wits about him drew.
What then? sang Plato's ghost,
"What then?"

One may well ask Dikshit, conceded that wealth, fame, power are ephemeral, what does peace of mind give you besides peace of mind. What then? ■

Giving peace a chance

Prosperity returns to the hills as political parties join hands to restore Darjeeling to its former glory

The tourists are back in Darjeeling. The roadside vendors are doing brisk business. Bargain-hunters and memento-collectors are thronging the shops once again. 'Peace' and 'development' are the new buzz-words in this West Bengal town, which till recently was at the centre of the agitation for a separate Gorkhaland. Says Subash Ghisingh, the chairman of the Darjeeling Hill Council and leader of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), "The politics of bargaining and confrontation are over; the politics of development and reconstruction will begin now."

Ghisingh envisages a Rs 260-crore package for the development of the region, which includes grandiose schemes such as the construction of highway flyovers and the setting up of a satellite tourist township near Ghoom. In addition, he feels that greater financial resources should be made available to the departments of health, water supply, education, housing and welfare of the Hill Council.

The GNLF leader's demands have raised a few eyebrows, including that of the Prime Minister's, who remarked that the Hill Council's demands exceeded that of certain states. But in support of his stand, Ghisingh has pointed out that the population of Darjeeling (over a million) is larger than that of the state of Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh or Nagaland.

Although the Centre has not been able to accept all of Ghisingh's demands, the Planning Commission has already sanctioned Rs 60 crores for the Council in the current financial year. "Another Rs 5 crores will be granted if the initial sum is utilised properly," says Tarun Dutta, chief secretary of West Bengal. In fact, the government has elaborate plans for Darjeeling—once the queen of hill stations. And if implemented, they may restore it to its pre-agitation glory.

The schemes under consideration are ambitious but feasible—the expansion of Bagdogra airport to accommodate air-buses; a helicopter service between Bagdogra and Lepong; a 50-100-room hotel; and the declaration of Hill Road as a National Highway.

To prove he means business, the Prime Minister has already initiated an action plan. On 13 June, the West Bengal planning secretary, Dr Bikram Sinha, and the Gorkha Hill Council executive, H. Pandey, met B.G. Deshmukh, the principal secretary to the Prime Minister to discuss specific measures for the revival of tourism and the supply of adequate drinking water.

The various political parties have sunk their differences for the moment to work together for the development of

the region. The Prime Minister's May visit to Darjeeling was not just a Congress affair; in fact, it was the GNLF leaders who played an important role at the meeting Rajiv Gandhi addressed on 19 May on the grounds of St Joseph's School.

Surprisingly, local Congress leaders did not seem to mind taking a back seat. "We will use every opportunity to make the people of the district listen to us, but we are in no hurry. Our immediate concern is peace and restoration of normal conditions," said Heman Rai,



THE GORKHALAND AGITATION

general secretary of the Darjeeling unit of the Congress. "We have survived the long months of turmoil. On the surface, things seem fine—the tourists are back, the shops are open. But an air of uncertainty still prevails. We will make every effort to bring back normal conditions in the district through democratic means," he added.

This sentiment is shared by the CPI(M) unit of the district. Says Ananda Pathak, the Marxist MP from Darjeeling, "We share the Hill Council's concern for rehabilitation and development programmes. Unless these programmes are implemented, it will be very difficult to usher in an era of peace and restore normal living conditions. Our first priority is to bring back those that have fled their homes and are still in hiding. Unless there is a semblance of normalcy, there is no question of elections or party politics. Restoration of peace is our top priority at the moment."

Peace may be the audible refrain, but

SUBASH

Ghisingh may have the overwhelming support of the people, but he also has to live up to an unrealistic level of expectations. And he has no magic wand to transform the shattered economy overnight

it is thoughts of revenge which motivate many local politicians. This has led to continuing violence in the hills. There are old scores to be settled; intra-party quarrels to be patched up or fought till death. On 9 June, the building occupied by the Gorkha Hill Council (the

West Bengal government Tourist Bureau) was ransacked by irate GNLf followers. Their wrath was directed at K.B. Rai, executive councillor in charge of the forest department. Rai's guard had assaulted a driver a few days back after a road accident, and GNLf activists who were friends of the driver had come to take revenge. Rai managed to escape their fury by jumping out of a first-floor window, but the Council house was extensively damaged—windows were broken and furniture smashed.

In Kalimpong, a picturesque hill station across the Teesta river, the tension is palpable. The area is carved up between warring factions of the GNLf and several self-styled leaders. In the fray are C.K. Pradhan (whose status in the GNLf hierarchy is currently ambiguous), the Chhatra Subba-led Gorkhaland Liberation Organisation and several opportunistic criminals. Subba, a former close associate of Ghisingh, had played a major role in making the GNLf's 40-day



THE DARJEELING ACCORD



THE GNLf SURRENDER ARMS



THE RETURN OF THE TOURISTS

(Clockwise from far left) The GNLf demanded a separate state; but settled for an autonomous Hill Council; the militants laid down arms and joined the mainstream; business is once again booming in Darjeeling

Kalimpong *bandh* a success. As a reward, he was made assistant secretary general of the party. But he fell out with his mentor, Ghisingh, over the Hill Council proposal. Subba refuses to settle for anything less than complete autonomy.

A former school teacher turned militant, C.K. Pradhan, on the other hand, continues to be not only a GNLf member, but also a councillor of the Darjeeling Hill Council, despite his differences with the party leadership. However, he was dismissed as the president of the Kalimpong unit of the party after the Hill Council elections in December last year for having raised anti-Ghisingh slogans. Since then fights between his and other GNLf factions have let loose a reign of terror in Kalimpong. The town has

"The politics of agitation are over"

GNLf supremo Subash Ghisingh now opts for "the politics of reconstruction"

The demands of the GNLf have been met, the accord has been signed, the people have demonstrated their faith in the party in the Hill Council election. But Council chairman Subash Ghisingh's problems are far from over. There are too many promises to keep, too many lofty expectations to fulfil, too many old scores to be settled. The cry for an independent Gorkhaland has not completely died down; the battle for territorial supremacy still breaks out between opposing party factions; workers of the CP(M) and the GNLf continue to clash in the tea garden unions; 15,000 people await rehabilitation; a few thousand are still fugitives across the border. Ghisingh is, however, going ahead with his development plans. Excerpts from an interview with the GNLf supremo:

SUNDAY: How is the Hill Council functioning?

Subash Ghisingh: We have no money. We have a lot of plans that we want to implement as soon as possible, but we have not received any funds as yet.

What are the areas that you wish to concentrate on? How long will you take to implement the schemes?



I have given a long list of projects to the state government—it can't be discussed in detail now. For instance, we want to improve roads, decongest Darjeeling by providing a new tourist centre, develop a tourist complex... But my first priority is to rehabilitate the 15,000 displaced.

So Ghisingh the agitator has become Ghisingh the administrator?

No, no, not an administrator, I am a developer. The politics of agitation and confrontation are over. Now is the time for the politics of reconstruction.

What is your relationship with the West Bengal chief minister, Jyoti Basu?

I have no quarrels with him or

anyone else in the government. I have extended my full cooperation to the process of transfer of departments and personnel to the Hill Council and I expect them to honour their commitments.

The demand for an independent statehood has been dropped...

Yes dropped, dropped. My dream consisted of two things—identity for the hill people and citizenship. Both these issues have been resolved successfully.

What about Chhatra Subba? He says he is going ahead with the demand for an independent state. Other people are bound to join hands with him.

There are some people who are never happy. They are not happy in this life, they won't be happy in their next life. As for Subba, he is politically insignificant—sarkar ka admi hai. He doesn't understand what political aspirations mean.

Kalimpong is still very tense. There is no peace there...

We have worked out a Rs 50-lakh development plan for Kalimpong. This is likely to be implemented soon. The disturbances created are artificial... if we had full control, we could stop everything within a week.

practically no tourists, the shops shut at 6 pm and locals are afraid to venture out after dark. Ghisingh himself has not visited the town after the Council elections. "We have a Rs 50-crore development plan for Kalimpong," he says to smoothen ruffled feathers. But peace in Kalimpong is still a distant dream.

Not that Ghisingh's problems elsewhere are over. Ghisingh may have overwhelming support of the people, as the poll results demonstrated, but he

also has to live up to an unrealistic level of expectations. But he has no magic wand to transform the shattered economy of the hill region overnight. The transition from agitational politics to the path of peace and development through democratic electoral processes is not an easy one. Hotheads like Subba who will not settle for anything less than complete autonomy make the transition even more difficult. Then, there are the dissidents within the GNLf.

Given these difficulties, will Ghisingh be able to bring back peace and prosperity to the hills? Much will depend on two factors—the GNLf supremo's ability to carry his colleagues with him and the

success of the Centre and the state to create a climate of cooperation and confidence.

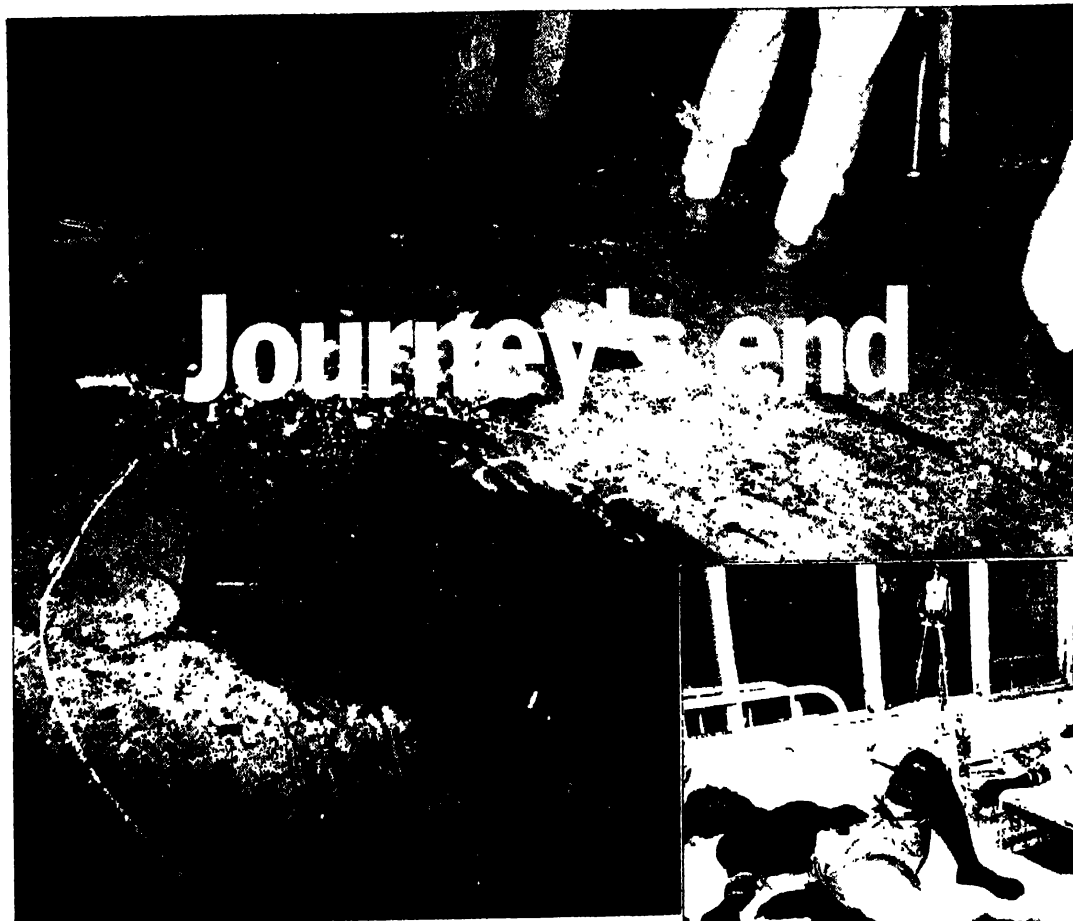
Says Tarun Dutta, "According to the clauses of the accord, we have transferred several departments, including personnel, to the Hill Council. We are very keen that a planned rehabilitation programme is implemented as soon as possible. Things can only be called normal when people can come back to their own homes without fear or anxiety." The state administration's priorities are clear, says Dutta—to "implement the accord and extend all cooperation to the Hill Council". It is now up to Ghisingh and his followers to rejuvenate the economy of the hills and restore tranquillity to the strife-torn district.

Debjani Sinha/Darjeeling

The office of the Darjeeling Hill Council: ambitious plans

DEBJANI SINHA

SUNDAY 25 June—1 July 1989



The spot where the powerful bomb exploded killing nine persons; (inset) the injured being treated in hospital; terrorists on the rampage



Punjab terrorists strike at New Delhi railway station

It was all over in a matter of seconds. In the morning of 12 June, unsuspecting passengers had queued up before the booking counter for the superfast Shatabdi Express at the crowded New Delhi railway station. Suddenly, a blinding flash of light followed by a loud explosion ripped through as cries of pain and anguish rent the air. Such was the impact of the explosion that a body flew up and hit the high ceiling. After a year's respite, the Punjab terrorists had again penetrated the capital's security net and struck.

Pawan Tulsi, who was standing on the first floor aisle overlooking the main reservation hall where the bomb exploded, was momentarily dumbfounded by the commotion but regained his composure and found that he too had been hit by a splinter. People were running all around and many lay in a pool of blood. According to him, most of those who were killed or injured were standing within a radius of 30 feet from

the site of the explosion. Nine people succumbed to their injuries and at least 50 others were undergoing treatment.

Three-year-old Sarwari had come with her parents from Pakistan and was on her way to Calcutta to visit her

relatives. The family had arrived at the Old Delhi railway station that morning and reached New Delhi a few hours later to catch a train to Calcutta. "But fate intervened and Sarwari was killed by the blast," moaned Saeeda Begum, the grief-stricken mother. Sahib Singh, a labourer from Bihar, was strolling on the fateful platform when he was hit by the powerful blast.

More than the tragedy, what has shocked the people is the ease with which the operation was carried out. The blame obviously fell on the Delhi Police. But, argued V.N. Singh, additional commissioner of police (CID), "every day, more than two lakh people stream in and out of New Delhi station. Is it humanly possible to know which item belongs to whom and which one of the luggage is potentially dangerous? It is easy to say that the police were lax but can anyone tell me what can be done?" Singh, who was earlier posted in Chandigarh and is familiar with the terrorists' *modus operandi*, confessed

Though the Babbar Khalsa is believed to have planned and carried out the explosion, the police are yet to come up with hard evidence to implicate this terrorist outfit



The slaying of three bus passengers by terrorists on 6 June near Amritsar would have passed off as another case of cold-blooded killing in troubled Punjab, had it not been for the rare grit of two Sikh youths—Avtar and Rajwant Singh—who challenged the militants and fell to a burst of gunfire while trying to save their Hindu co-passengers. Both in their twenties they did not, however, die in vain: by putting up a daring resistance, they succeeded in saving the lives of six passengers who were at the mercy of a truculent gang.

There was no hint of the impending catastrophe when the bus left Amritsar at 1.15 pm, recalls Dalbir Singh, Avtar's cousin. But an hour later two men boarded the vehicle when it stopped at a petrol pump and joined three men, who were travelling from Amritsar and were seated on the bonnet beside the driver. No sooner had the bus pulled out of the petrol pump and began speeding along the Amritsar-Pathankot highway, than the men opened their bags and pulled out three AK-47 rifles and two revolvers, and forced the driver at gunpoint to divert the bus to a deserted link road, near Talwandi village.

It was at once clear that terrorists had taken over. Avtar Singh sprang from his seat by the window and blocked the terrorists' path, while two of the Hindu passengers jumped out of the running vehicle and managed to escape. At this, the terrorists ordered the driver to stop the bus and asked all Muslim passengers, if there were any, to identify themselves. But when no one responded, they ordered the Hindus to get down.

"I was made to stand second in a row of seven passengers, facing two rifle-toting boys," recalls Joginder Pal, who was bodily lifted from his seat by the terrorists and thrown out of the bus. "Just when we went down touching their feet, begging for our lives, we heard someone shout inside the bus, *Enada ki kasur hai?* (what crime have they committed)." It was Rajwant Singh pleading with the terrorists not to kill innocent people, while Avtar grappled with one of them, other passengers later confirmed.

Realising that time was running out, the terrorists opened fire at

Challenging the terrorists

In a daring act, two Sikh youths fall to extremists' bullets while trying to save the lives of Hindu passengers

Rajwant and Avtar got out of the bus, leaving the two young Sikhs lying in a pool of blood. But before they fled, they emptied their guns on the seven passengers standing outside. The mayhem over, the bus, with all the injured men, sped back to Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital in Amritsar, where Avtar and Rajwant were declared 'brought dead,' while the other seven were admitted and operated upon. One of them, however, died three days later.

Joginder Pal, who is recovering steadily after seven bullets were removed from his body, says he owes his life to the two Sikh youths.

Avtar's cousin, Dalbir Singh, told SUNDAY at his native village, Hakimpur, about 6 km from the Indo-Pakistani border, that Avtar was an *amritdhari* Sikh (one who has tasted the holy nectar and who is supposed to be following the path shown by the gurus). "I wish I could tell them that," he said, "but I dared not. I knew they would kill me if I opened my mouth."

The people view the incident as a testimony to the age-old bond existing between the Sikhs and the Hindus in Punjab, while the administration interprets it as an indication of their success in trying to isolate the terrorists from the mainstream. "Such incidents are a part of the renewed confidence of the people," says DIG, CRPF, S.S. Virk. He adds: "We are also getting more information about the activities and hideouts of the terrorists." And Sarabjit Singh, deputy commissioner of Amritsar, feels that the people are getting disillusioned about the terrorists.

Governor S.S. Ray has presented two cheques of Rs 1 lakh each to the panchayats of the villages to which Avtar and Rajwant belonged, besides giving Rs 20,000 each to the bereaved families. The two families



have decided to use the money for the betterment of their villages, where they plan to build a school and a hospital in the memory of the two youths.

What is remarkable is that Rajwant decided to stand up for the Hindus despite the fact that his family had suffered much during the anti-Sikh

riots in November 1984. The family had to move to Punjab from Dhanbad, in Bihar, after their house was burnt down. Sources close to the family say that Rajwant had some links with the terrorists, but decided to sever them after they defiled the sanctum sanctorum of the temple during the siege of Black Thunder



(Clockwise from bottom left) The ill-fated bus which was hijacked by terrorists on its way from Amritsar to Pathankot; Avtar Singh's family; Joginder Pal, one of the injured passengers; a moral victory



Political observers, however, feel that Avtar and Rajwant's pluckiness had little to do with the government's claim that the situation in the state was returning to normal. Says Satpal Dang, national council member of the CPI, says that there are dozens of examples of Sikhs saving Hindus in the villages of Punjab. There are, indeed, many cases in which, the two communities have formed joint defence parties and are protecting each other. But a senior civil servant perhaps summed up the Avtar-Rajwant phenomenon best when he said the people were beginning to challenge the power of the gun irrespective of the success or failure of the cops. If that were true, it might mean the light at the end of the tunnel in Punjab.

Vipul Mehta/Amritsar

that the police are yet to find a clue. The splinters used inside the bomb were unusual in the sense that instead of the customary iron nails and glass pieces, nuts and bolts were used in this case. The Delhi Police have sent a team to Punjab to check out this interesting aspect. "Perhaps this will give us a clue," Singh added.

A few days later, the police claimed to have made a headway and identified Sukhjinder Singh Brar, the squint-eyed, self-styled 'lieutenant general' of the Babbar Khalsa who was killed in an operation days after the explosion, as the mastermind behind the blast. The Delhi Police even published a 'photo identity kit' of the suspect.

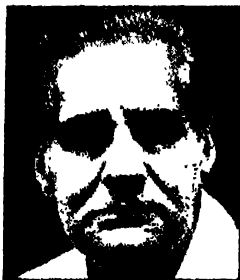
But why did the Punjab terrorists strike in Delhi after such a long gap? V. N. Singh and many of his colleagues feel that the extremists have suddenly turned vindictive because of the reverses suffered by them at the hands of the security forces in Punjab. Most of the terrorist groups in the troubled state have been wiped out and many of their leaders have been shot dead by the cops. "The security forces in Punjab have the upper hand and the terrorists desperately need to do something to show their supporters, both in India and abroad, that they are still active. A blast in Delhi would attract world attention," Singh said.

Though the Babbar Khalsa is believed to have planned and carried out the explosion, the police are yet to come up with hard evidence to implicate this dreaded terrorist outfit. Singh admitted that at this stage the police are seriously handicapped by the lack of intelligence reports. The people in Punjab are wary of confiding in the police because not only do they run the risk of being killed, they also face the prospect of being socially alienated from their community as the present situation in Punjab has been given a religious colour. "The battle against the terrorists should be fought by both the police and the people," Singh asserts.

Meanwhile, the Delhi administration has once again decided to review the security of the capital and educate people in the *modus operandi* of the terrorists. From now on, apart from the passengers, railway porters and sweepers would also be trained to thwart the designs of the extremists. Posters warning the people would also be put up by the police. But will such routine measures, which are taken every time tragedy strikes, instil a sense of security among the capital's masses?

Patrilekha Chatterjee/New Delhi

Tremors of 1975



Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's style of functioning reminds us of the dark days of the Emergency

KULDIP NAYAR

What has not changed even 14 years after the imposition of Emergency (26 June, 1975) is the tendency of our rulers to subvert institutions in order to serve personal and party ends. Those in authority—whatever be their post—have no compunction in using power, pressure or whatever else it takes to achieve their purpose.

The decline in standards had begun long ago but during and after the Emergency they were considered irrelevant, having no meaning in "practical" politics and administration. Now there is no distinction between right and wrong.

The Emergency brought in its wake a kind of fear psychosis which the nation had not experienced after the British left. And it was this fear which made even the most conscientious compromise with the excesses committed by the regime. The lifting of Emergency revived the basic freedoms that the Constitution has conferred, but not the values destroyed. The licence enjoyed during the Emergency had hardened the minds of those who exercised it.

The behaviour of today's rulers, both ministers and officials, reflects the same style—and conceit. That certain things are not done in a democratic set-up or that certain methods are wrong to use is no more relevant. Although almost a decade and a half have passed since the Emergency was imposed, basically there is very little change. Only the actors are different; otherwise it is the same old drama of deceit and delusion.

DURING THE Emergency, you had V.C. Shukla; now you have K.K. Tewari. The former had the weapon of censorship; now, even without that official sanction, Tewari has been able to snuff out even the little credibility that television, radio, and even news agencies enjoy. There is none to say 'no' to any order given over the

telephone by anyone in the government's information set-up or the PM's secretariat.

No doubt, officially, pressmen have not been asked to bend, but Tewari, by bluff and bluster and twisting the arms of some hapless newspaper proprietors is making sure that he gets a "positive response" from many of them. Flow of information, which has never been a freely available commodity during Rajiv Gandhi's regime, has been further curbed.

Briefing has once again been restricted to a select group of "committed" journalists; foreign secretary S.K. Singh has made it the "normal" practice, and other secretaries to the Government of India are following suit. The Prime Minister steps in only when the situation demands a more responsible and direct attack on the Opposition.

At least K.K. Tewari is frank about this and the press knows where he stands. The most sinister are persons like Satish Sharma, who, with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's backing, are trying to gag the press and subvert other institutions on which the structure of democracy rests. They are using the system and even distorting it to serve their ends. There is some hope however that when they go out of office, much of the harm can be undone—Mrs Gandhi's laws and constitutional amendments were withdrawn when she was thrown out of power, and even when she returned in 1980, she did not bring them back. But how about their abettors—the bureaucrats?

THE REAL harm to the system and institutions is done by the bureaucracy because the bureaucrats are insiders, and they know how to twist or go around a rule or precedent without affecting the facade. The harm they cause is difficult to undo; it is like a cancer affecting the whole system. And one must remember that while the

government may be voted out of power the bureaucracy remains. The Shah Commission, which was set up to enquire into the Emergency excesses detailed how the ethical considerations inherent in public behaviour waned and in many cases were beyond the mental grasp of many of the public functionaries.

Officials surrounding Rajiv Gandhi, whether Gopi Arora, M.S. Ahluwalia, Suman Dubey, G. Parthasarathy, Mani Shankar Aiyar or Ronen Sen, all of them are intelligent men; so are cabinet secretary T.N. Seshan and the PM's secretary and information secretary, Murali. But the harm they have done to the system so as to "build up" or "perpetrate" Rajiv Gandhi may have been irreparable.

True, they and their predecessors, former cabinet secretary P.C. Alexander, former defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar and former Intelligence Bureau chief Rajeshwar, have been able to cover up cleverly scandals over the the Fairfax contract, the Bofors gun deal, the West German submarine deal or the scores of deals with Italian connections. True, they have woven a fine network of misinformation and disinformation which has suppressed the truth.

But is it what they should have tried to achieve? The truth will catch up with them the day after, if not tomorrow. They may realise then the wrongs they have done. ■

During the Emergency, you had V.C. Shukla; now you have K.K. Tewari. Tewari has been able to snuff out even the little credibility that television, radio and other news agencies enjoy

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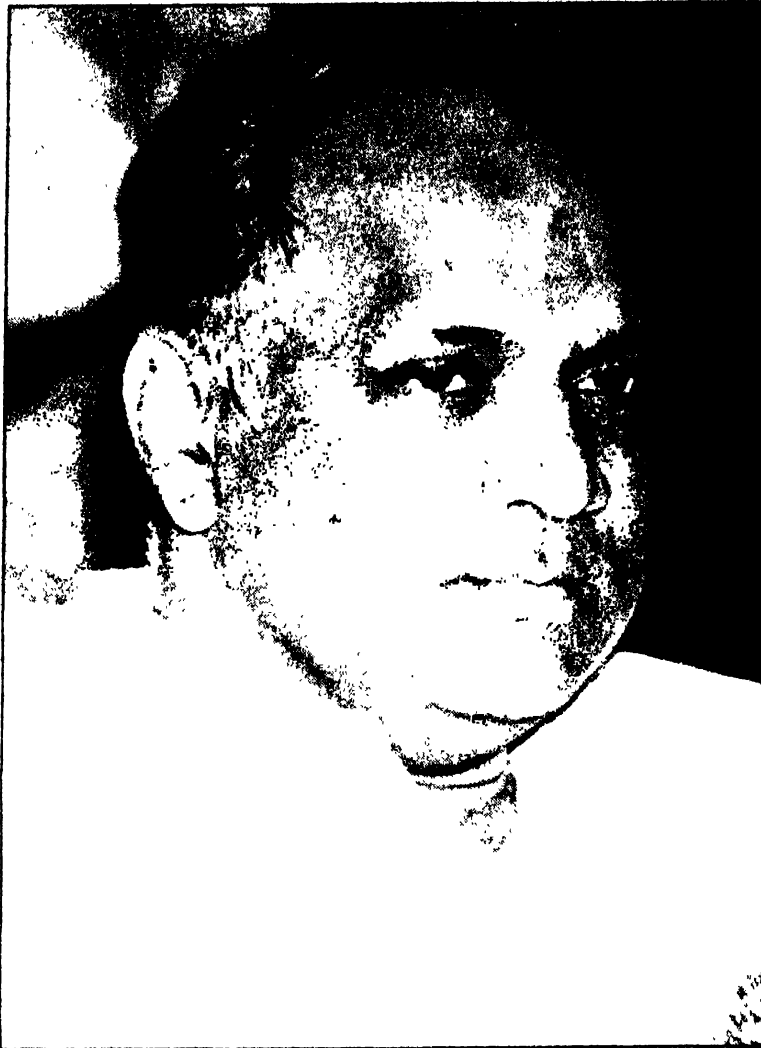
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The plots to a fall

The dereservation of 285 plots in Bombay by chief minister Pawar and his handing them over to private builders is threatening to blow up into a major scandal which may cost him his seat



Bombay tabloids and eveningers are full of speculation about Pawar's possible resignation. Vasant Sathe contributed to the rumour mill by saying that Rajiv Gandhi was displeased with Pawar

What is uncertain—and the subject of much speculation—is whether Sharad Pawar will—or can—continue as the chief minister of Maharashtra. But what is beyond doubt is that his image has taken such a battering lately over the issue of dereservation of 285 plots of land that were reserved for public utilities in Bombay that it will be almost impossible for him to undo the damage.

Leading city tabloids and eveningers are full of speculation about his possible resignation. Pawar has himself fuelled such speculation by saying that he was going out of town for some time, while actually locking himself up in his old flat on Napean Sea Road where he was said to be gleaning through files. Union energy minister Vasant Sathe, who was in the city for a medical check-up, contributed his bit to the rumour mill by saying that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was himself displeased with Pawar. But Sathe did not make it clear whether the Prime Minister was annoyed with Pawar for the questionable land deals, in which he is said to have collected several crores of rupees, or whether it was for the latter's stand regarding NABARD (National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development) loans to co-op banks.

Sources in Delhi say that Pawar was offered a berth in the Union cabinet, but the chief minister is believed to have declined the offer, as he would not like to leave the state. In fact, Pawar has tried to scoff the rumours about his possible resignation as a "matter of amusement to me".

The immediate cause of Pawar's troubles was the dereservation of 285 plots earmarked for parks, hospitals and other public utilities under the Bombay Development Plan and handing them over to private builders. While the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) has challenged the move in court, the followers of the former Maharashtra chief minister, A.R. Antulay, have sought the Governor's permission to file a criminal prosecution against Pawar. Political observers feel that Antulay has

an old axe to grind, for he was hounded out of office on the charge of having misused his office for private gain by the state's powerful sugar lobby. Friends of Antulay allege that all chief ministers collect money for their party, but that it was only Antulay who was singled out for punishment.

Antulay's efforts to unseat Pawar are too obvious. He has been camping in Delhi to conduct an orchestrated campaign against Pawar in the higher echelons of the Congress(I) and has dissident leader Shivajirao Patil as his drummer boy. A confidant of Pawar, however, describes Antulay's activities as "election-year drama", and adds that "it will get worse as election approaches, but Mr Pawar will overcome it".

Indeed, Pawar seems ready to face any challenge from the Centre. "Why should I feel threatened?" he told SUNDAY. "I am not worried. I have ordered an enquiry into the 285 cases under the Commission of Enquiry Act, which means everything will be out in the open. Would I do it if I were afraid?" he asks.

Perhaps. But the constitution of the enquiry commission by Pawar has itself given rise to suspicion about his motivation. Even the former chief secretary of the state, J.B. De Souza, who had set the ball rolling by exposing the changes that had been made in the Bombay Development Plan, was surprised by the move. Pawar and his minister for urban development were looking for a solution to the problem and had approached De Souza to mediate between the government and the BEAG. An agreement had almost been reached and it was decided that a three-member committee would go into the matter, and the BEAG, for its part, decided to withdraw the case it had filed in the Bombay High Court.

But on returning from Delhi recently, Pawar announced the setting up of the enquiry commission and cut off all dialogue with the BEAG. De Souza feels that the chief minister changed his mind because the three-member committee would have given its report within three months, while the enquiry commission would take at least six months to do so. This means, the enquiry report will not be available before the elections.

Is Pawar buying time? Opposition leaders Chhagan Bhujbal of the Shiv Sena and Mrinal Gore of the Janata Dal think he is. Political analysts are of the opinion that he is buying time to make peace with Delhi. They feel that it is highly improbable that Rajiv Gandhi was unaware of the fact that Pawar was collecting funds. In fact, they allege that one of Rajiv's Doon School friends is also

involved in the deals. What Delhi is really in the dark about is the amount of money Pawar has actually raised. It was Murli Deora, a Congress(I) leader, who first raised the issue by telling Ashok Padihari of *Saamna*, a daily newspaper backed by the Shiv Sena, that Pawar had collected money to the tune of Rs 2,000 crores. Rajiv Gandhi is apparently, disturbed at the possibility of Pawar quitting the party, for in that case, he could wreak havoc on the Congress(I) by uti-

lising the immense money power that he has allegedly garnered.

Pawar's detractors have also accused him of maintaining links with a number of Opposition leaders. Much heat and dust was raised when Antulay and dissident leader Nasikrao Tirpude claimed that Pawar had hobnobbed with Janata leaders Chandra Shekhar, S.R. Bommai and Ramakrishna Hegde and ignored Congressmen during S.M. Joshi's funeral.

Pawar's followers, however, vouch-



A.R. Antulay has sought the Governor's permission to file a criminal prosecution against the CM. Antulay's efforts to unseat Pawar are all too obvious: he was hounded out of office by the sugar lobby on a similar charge

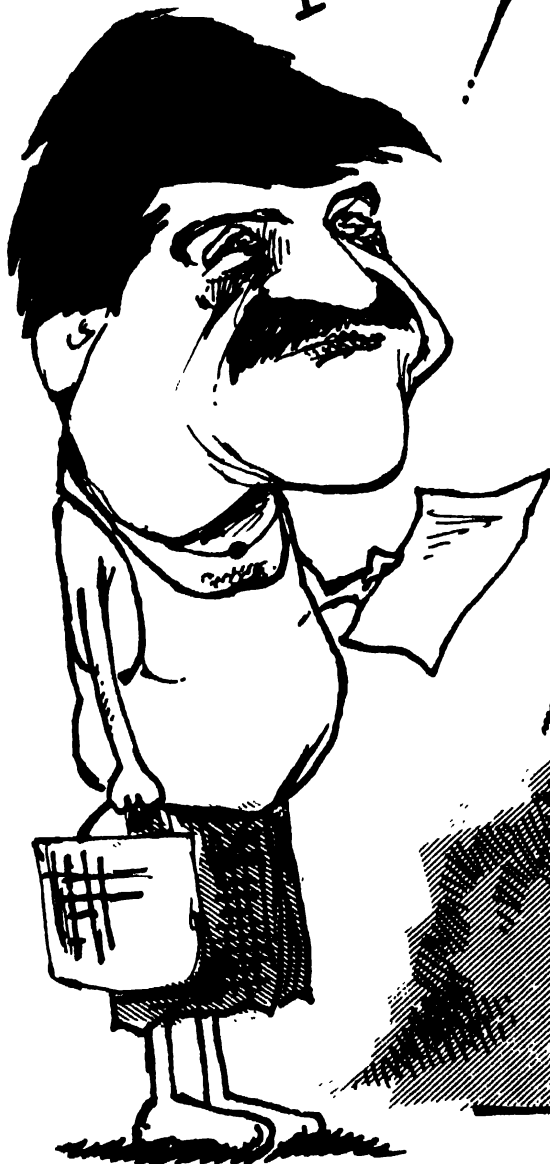
safe that no money changed hands and political observers think it is unlikely that Delhi will disturb Pawar till the Lok Sabha elections are over. But there is a growing disillusionment within the Congress(I) about his ability to contain the Shiv Sena and the Shetkari Sangathan. His opponents are trying to impress upon the party high command that Pawar will prove incapable of leading the Congress(I) to victory in Maharashtra as he has failed to counter the two forces. They also allege that Pawar's pro-farmer decisions such as reducing interest on and writing off of loans and the purchase of onions at a loss are all aimed at bolstering his own image and embarrassing Delhi. Pawar, however, claims that he is only following the guidelines laid down by the party. But whether the party will stand by him has itself become a big question.

Olga Telli/Bombay

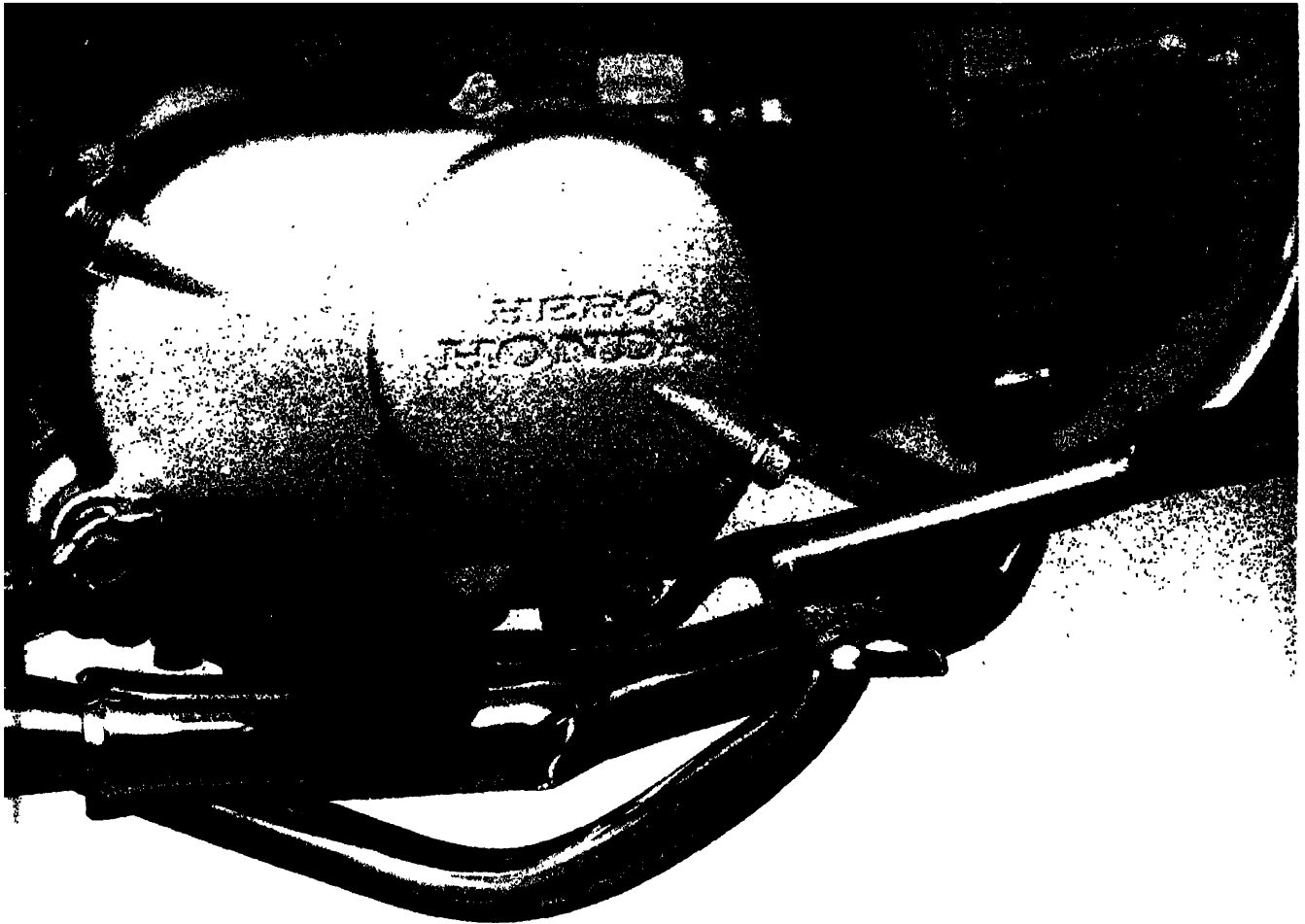
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2 KILOS TOMATOES
2 KILOS POTATOES
2 PROPRIETORS
1 EDITOR...
!



RAVI SHANKAR



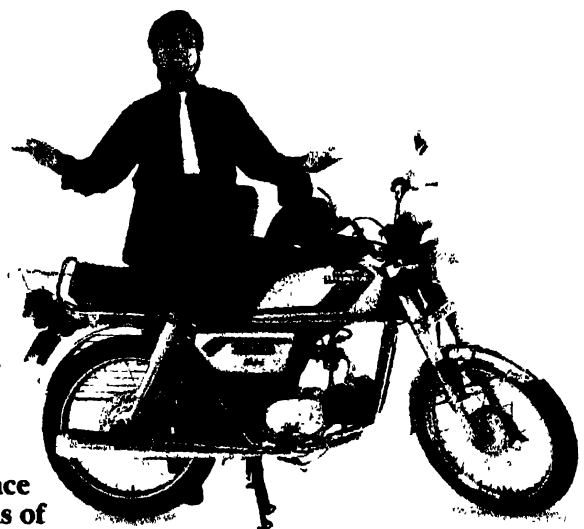
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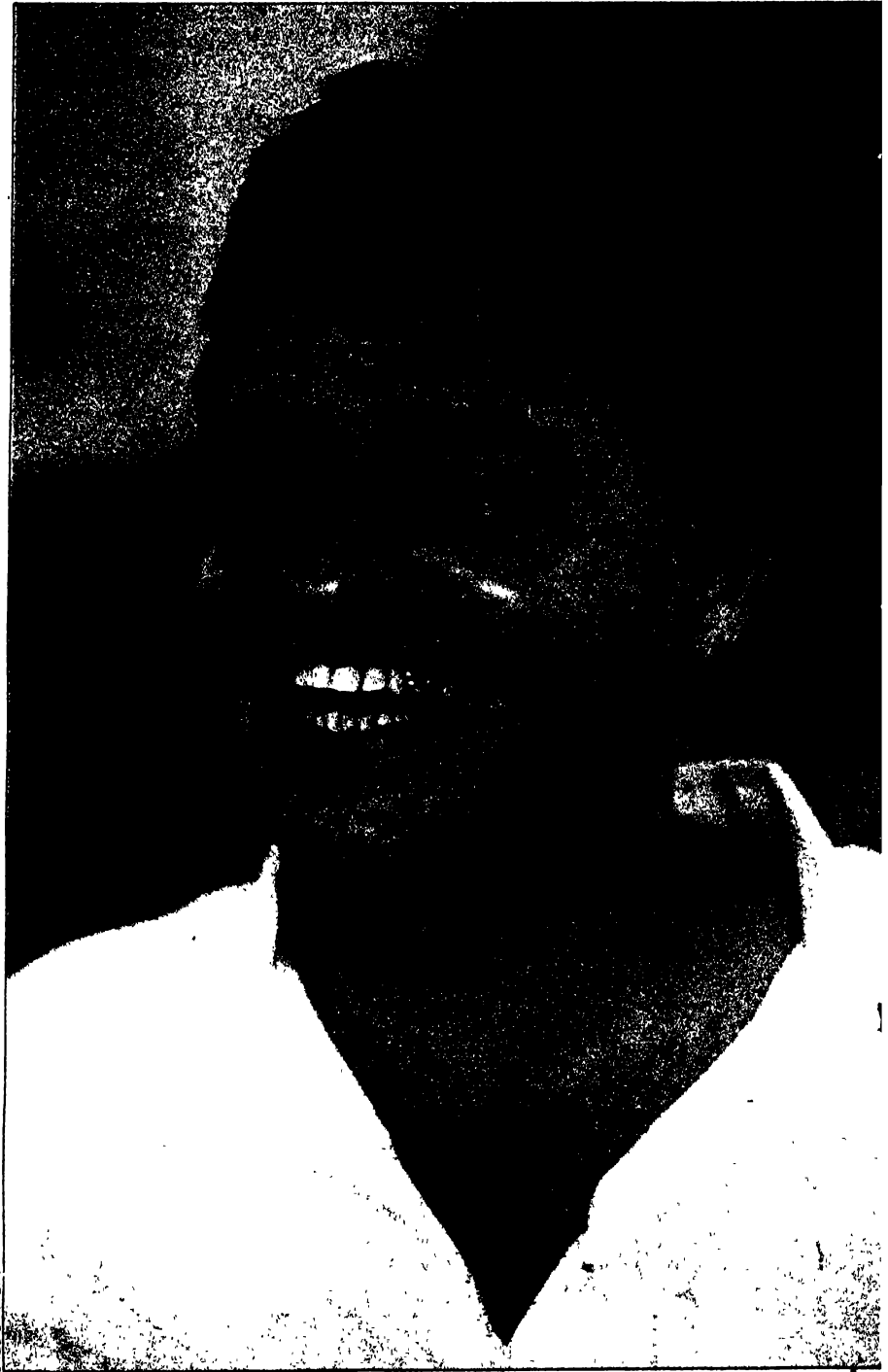
The other

Slowly, effortlessly, the Captain has emerged at the centre of New Delhi's power equations. He is now India's second most powerful man after Rajiv Gandhi

How they sniggered. Three years ago, Satish Sharma was referred to by the press and fellow politicians as, among other things, a 'chapras', 'ADC', 'householder' and 'butler'. Even after Rajiv Gandhi's former Indian Airlines colleague was given an office to work out of at the PM's residence at 7 Race Course Road in 1986, no one had any doubts about what his importance stemmed from. Yes, of course, Sharma was vested with the sensitive job of tending Amethi—the Uttar Pradesh parliamentary seat which Rajiv first won in 1981. But Sharma's real constituency—the sniggers went—was Rajiv Gandhi's household.

It was an unkind view, somewhat exaggerated, but not wholly untrue. For Sharma spent a good part of his time supervising the domestic chores at the Race Course Road residence. It was his responsibility, for instance, to ensure that the Gandhi kitchen was adequately stocked with *dal* or pasta; to see that the children, Priyanka and Rahul, were properly coached by their private tutors; to see right and left for mechanical defects in Rajiv's fleet of cars.

The former Indian Airlines captain undertook all this with enthusiasm and



JAGDISH YADAV

pilot

without any apparent embarrassment. It may have given him the kind of access to Rajiv and his family that few enjoyed, but he was treated as something of an 'outsider'. He was not invited to Rajiv's parties, not taken on the Prime Minister's holidays, never made part of his charmed social circle. Sharma, after all, had little in common with Rajiv despite the shared Indian Airlines past. The Prime Minister's real friends were the old boys from Doon School who later went on to Oxford and Cambridge.

When Rajiv assumed office, it was this charmed Doon-Oxbridge circle that acquired the most political power. The taciturn Arun Singh, then parliamentary secretary, was perhaps closest to Rajiv and his *de facto* political aide. As home minister, Arun Nehru's influence extended far beyond North Block: he managed the Congress party's affairs with an iron hand and arguably also ran the government. Some power remained with older Congressmen. Union minister P. Shiv Shankar, for instance, had Rajiv's ear and was consulted on all legal matters. And Makhanlal Fotedar, who had an office at Race Course Road by virtue of being Rajiv's political adviser, was a force to contend with.

Sharma, in contrast, enjoyed little political clout. He was dismissed by most of Rajiv's friends as a flunkey, a lowly factotum, a man who had found his true level in the menial domestic chores he performed.

In a sense, nothing has changed for Sharma. He still ensures that the carnelloni served at the Gandhi table is just right, that the children learn their geography and mathematics well and defective carburettors are repaired swiftly. But in another, everything has. Arun Singh retired to a farm at Ranikhet; Arun Nehru was unceremoniously dumped; Fotedar was shifted to the

steel and mines ministry and has been partially sidelined; and Shiv Shankar does not enjoy as much importance as he did.

It would be too much to say that the 'butler' did it, but one consequence of the changed power equations has been the ascendance of Sharma. The sniggers have ceased. Today, few would dismiss Sharma as a mere odd-jobs man with no political say. No one is as close to Rajiv as Sharma now. No one dares cross his path and Congressmen live in fear of him. He is arguably the most powerful man in the country today after Rajiv.

The transition from 'butler' to political *maitre de* may have come easily and painlessly for Sharma, but power has brought with it scandal and controversy. For a man who claims to be nothing more than a Rajya Sabha MP from Madhya Pradesh, whose only job is to help Rajiv run Amethi, Sharma—who

Mehta resigned.

The *Post* incident followed charges made by C.R. Irani, the managing director of the Calcutta-based *The Statesman*—the other controversy that Sharma has been embroiled in recently. In a press conference held on 2 May, Irani accused Sharma of instructing the authorities not to clear the newspaper's proposal to construct a multi-storeyed building on its land in New Delhi's Connaught Place. Charging Sharma with "gross abuse of power", Irani claimed that the Captain had threatened him through an intermediary that the paper would not be allowed to develop its property unless it adopted a less hostile stance.

The suggestion was that Sharma was getting his own back for *The Statesman's* exposé on the deal between Japan's Sumitomo Corporation and the government-owned Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) and the Gas Au-

People believe that Rajiv Gandhi will never let Satish Sharma down, that he will defend him to the end. Sharma's influence derives from this perception



maintains a studiously low profile—has been in the news a lot. And almost always received a bad press.

Last fortnight, Sharma made the front-pages once again when he was accused of doing a deal with the management of the Bombay-based daily *The Indian Post*. The allegation went that Sharma promised the *Post's* proprietor, Vijaypat Singhan (of the JK group), that he would arrange for the quick clearance of some Rs 500-crore worth of pending industrial projects if the newspaper adopted a more acceptable editorial line. When Singhan passed this information on to his editor, Vinod

thority of India Limited (GAIL). Sharma's builder/hotelier friend, Lalit Suri, was said to have received, in contravention of the government's ruling, a staggering Rs 6.5 crores as commission on a purchase of some Rs 100 crores by ONGC and GAIL. The report hinted that Sharma was behind the hiring of Suri as the agent.

If the press perceives Sharma as an enemy, then he sees it as irresponsible and biased against him. He is believed to have supported last year's Defamation Bill and remains deeply suspicious of journalists. (He agreed initially to talk to SUNDAY for this story, but backed out at

the last moment.)

Partly, the press' hostility has to do with Sharma's position as Rajiv's top aide; the media feel this makes him fair game. But Sharma's lifestyle does encourage speculation about his income. Two years ago, the press asked how a man who once lived in a little flat in Delhi's downmarket Gautam Nagar could afford ten acres of farmland on the outskirts of the capital. How he could then build a pool on this land. And the most memorable: how he could afford Italian marble tiles for which he paid Rs 2 lakhs as import duty.

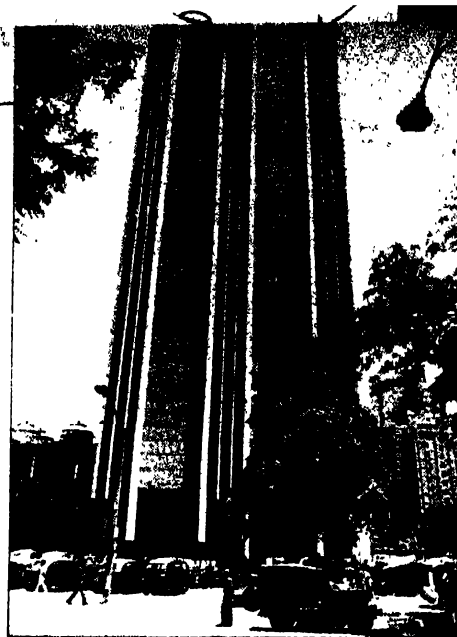
A few months ago, Ram Jethmalani produced documents linking Sharma to Maruti Technical Services (MTS), of which Sonia Gandhi was managing director in 1975. Jethmalani claimed that MTS dealt with a woman who later shared in the Bofors kickbacks.

Such charges anger Sharma. He regards Jethmalani's comments as forgeries and argues that his Dutch wife

Stera's income from the two boutiques she runs in Delhi pays for his lifestyle. The campaign against him, he maintains, is not only malicious but based on the misconception that he helps run the country. In fact, he says, with uncharacteristic humility, he is no more than a personal friend of Rajiv's.

The last he has been for a long time now. As Sharma tells it, he and Rajiv first met one day in the early Sixties, when they were both members of the Delhi Flying Club. The story goes that Sharma was cycling to the club, when Rajiv, who recognised him as a fellow member, stopped his car and invited Sharma to hop in. The two trainee pilots, both in their teens then, chatted all the way to the club.

The training over, Sharma left for England to study and the two saw nothing of each other for a long while. Their next meeting was in the early Seventies. Rajiv had accompanied his mother to



Cutting one's own throat

Did Satish Sharma have former Hindustan Times editor, Prem Shankar Jha, sacked?

Satish Sharma's interference in the affairs of *The Statesman* and *The Indian Post* has received a fair share of publicity. But investigations conducted by SUNDAY suggest that his first—and perhaps most brazen—operation had to do with *The Hindustan Times* (HT). That Sharma was instrumental in getting the newspaper's former editor, Prem Shankar Jha, removed from his post. The affable Jha, who now edits the Ambani-owned *Commerce*, surprised many by suddenly leaving *The Hindustan Times* on 21 April 1987.

Oddly enough, leads into the story originated from a source close to Sharma himself. The source claimed that Sharma had told him just five days or so before Jha quit that he (Sharma) was "going to see that this man was sacked". Apparently, Sharma was angry that an article he wanted to plant in *The Hindustan Times* was not carried.

The story (as related by Sharma to the source) goes like this. Sharma had come by a document which established that V.P. Singh (who resigned as defence minister on 12 April) had contravened the law by

failing to convert a property he owns at Rajpur Road in Dehradun from 'residential' to 'commercial'. Sharma handed the document over to Jha, who instructed one of his correspondents (Mukul Shukla, who still works for the newspaper) to check out the facts in Dehradun. Shukla—who, according to the Sharma version, is a V.P. Singh fan—handed the document over to the Raja and did not file the story. Sharma, angry with Jha for selecting the 'wrong' correspondent to do the story, summoned the HT's proprietor, K.K. Birla, who was abroad, and pressured him to ask Jha to leave.

It is an amazing story and if it has gone unreported, it is because none of the characters involved is willing to speak forthrightly. When SUNDAY contacted Jha, he affirmed that he had been approached by someone with the story, but that he "had no knowledge whether he was an intermediary of Sharma's". Jha is tight-lipped about the suggestion that Sharma could have had a hand in his ouster, but says "he cannot rule out the possibility".

Like Jha, the HT's correspondent,

Mukul Shukla, is reluctant to talk "about such a sensitive issue". Shukla denies that he was given a document relating to V.P. Singh's property and thus there is no question of him having handed it over to the Raja. All he is willing to say is: "I was asked one day in April '87 by the editor (Jha) to leave for Dehradun at five minutes' notice and check out the veracity of the allegation. I did what I was asked to do as a reporter and I filed my story." So why was the story not carried? Shukla will not say. And did he discover that the allegation against V.P. Singh was true? Shukla repeats himself: "I checked out the facts and I did what I was asked to do as a reporter."

The other 'player' in this drama is just as circumspect. When SUNDAY contacted V.P. Singh, he acknowledged that he was aware that the



(Clockwise from top left)
The Hindustan Times'

Delhi office: Sharma's first operation;
K.K. Birla: bowed to political pressure?;
Prem Shankar Jha:
mysterious resignation;
Satish Sharma:
Involved?; V.P.
Singh: tight-lipped



HT had been investigating his Rajpur Road property. Did he provide Shukla or Jha with evidence to establish that he had converted the property from 'residential' to 'commercial' as the law dictated? The Raja won't say either: "Please refer all such questions on this matter to Prem Shankar." The *HT's* proprietor, K.K. Birla, was not available for comment. However, his daughter, Shobhana Bhartia, who manages the paper's affairs, denied that Jha's ouster had anything to do with the V.P. Singh story. "It was a purely administrative decision and had nothing to do with this," she said.

It is difficult to reconstruct what really happened in the face of such reticence, but it is possible to make a few informed guesses. It is very likely that both Jha and Shukla believed that it was necessary to check

Hyderabad and Sharma, who was training there, decided to get in touch with him. Sharma was nervous that Rajiv would not remember him, but he went ahead and telephoned Raj Bhavan, where Mrs Gandhi and her son were staying. Rajiv, by Sharma's account, was exceedingly courteous and warm, and invited Sharma to come and see him in Delhi.

Later, the two got jobs in Indian Airlines and flew the Delhi-Bhopal route together on a number of occasions. It is believed that they were not that friendly then, but if Jethmalani is right, then Sharma was already very close to the Gandhi family in 1975. For his documents showed that the Captain was helping Sonia's Maruti Technical Services bag an export order.

When Rajiv entered politics in 1981, Sharma was one of his many friends who was invited to help him. After Rajiv won the Amethi byelection—the seat fell vacant after Sanjay's death—Sharma

began doing odd jobs for him. The Captain's job mainly involved sorting out the mail, fixing engagements and secretarial duties. Arun Singh was Rajiv's most trusted aide then and Sharma was perceived as the least important member of Rajiv's team of politico friends.

This continued even after Rajiv was made the Congress general secretary in 1982. It was only the following year that Sharma was given a room at 2A Motilal Nehru Marg, the office that Arun Singh used to work out of. But even so, his duties remained largely secretarial and he worked only part-time. It was only after Arun Singh was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1984 that Sharma decided to chuck up his job with Indian Airlines.

Sharma assumed a more important role after Rajiv became Prime Minister in late 1984, especially when Arun Singh was made parliamentary secretary. The responsibility of looking after Amethi was transferred from Arun Singh to Sharma. A few months after the Prime

out the allegation before committing it to print. And that either or both of them decided that the best way to do this would be by confronting the Raja with it. The fact that V.P. Singh knows (and knew) about the *HT* story on his property corroborates this.

It is just as possible that Shukla discovered—after making enquiries in Dehradun and of V.P. Singh—that the allegation was completely unfounded. For one, the planned exposé on V.P. Singh was bound to have found its way into print sooner or later if the allegation had been true. Since it hasn't, it is very likely

that the 'information' Sharma or whoever else had on Singh was false. Moreover, the story Shukla filed was never carried. Could this have been because its contents embarrassed the accuser more than the accused?

So where does all this leave Sharma? Was he really behind Jha's ouster? It's hard to say, but the facts suggest that he may well have been involved in the *HT* drama in one way or another. For a start, neither Jha, Shukla nor V.P. Singh denies that Sharma tried to plant the story (Jha, of course, has gone further in "not ruling out the possibility" of Sharma's involvement). Then, Jha left the *HT* on 21 April, 1987—just four or five days after SUNDAY's source was told by Sharma that he was planning to get rid of Jha. Moreover, 21 April was just a fortnight or so after Shukla began investigating his story.

There is another disturbing detail. The *HT's* proprietor, K.K. Birla, was abroad just before Jha quit and he *did* rush back to Delhi suddenly. Was he summoned by Sharma as the source claims he was? Finally, the last column that Jha wrote for his former newspaper railed against political interference in the press and suggested that the *HT* was not free from it either. It was titled 'Cutting one's own throat'. Did Prem Shankar Jha do just this by not carrying Sharma's story in the manner he wanted?

Was Sharma really behind Prem Shankar Jha's ouster? It's hard to say, but the facts suggest that he was involved in one way or the other

Minister shifted residence to 7 Race Course Road, Sharma was given an office there. Barring his personal secretary, the only other person who enjoyed this privilege was Rajiv's political adviser, Makhanlal Fotedar.

It was inevitable that the two would clash. To Fotedar, a dab hand at palace politics, Sharma was a threat. Soon after Rajiv assumed office, he and Arun Nehru had ganged up to throw R.K. Dhawan out. But only, it seemed, to see him replaced by someone who had all the makings of a Dhawan.

Nevertheless, Fotedar was well-entrenched in the palace and had the backing of the all-powerful Arun Nehru. Moreover, the threat seemed distant as

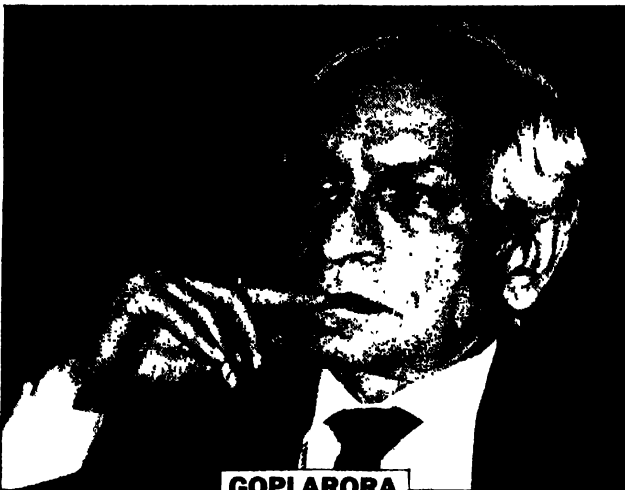
It was during the crisis in 1987 that Satish Sharma began playing a political role. Partymen started using him as a conduit to pass on messages to the PM

access to Parliament's Central Hall—to partymen, the Opposition and the press.

Yet, during much of '86, it was Fotedar who called the shots. Sharma's responsibilities fell into three categories. He was formally in charge of Amethi; oversaw the arrangements for Rajiv's meetings, especially when foreign guests were invited at his house; and tended to the household. In a sense, it was the last duty which has made him what he is today. It meant free access to the Gandhi household and a close relationship with Sonia. Sharma's day followed a set pattern. He would reach the Race Course Road residence at 8 am every morning, spend an hour or so with the family to find out what needed doing, work in his office until two in the



ARUN NEHRU



GOPI ARORA

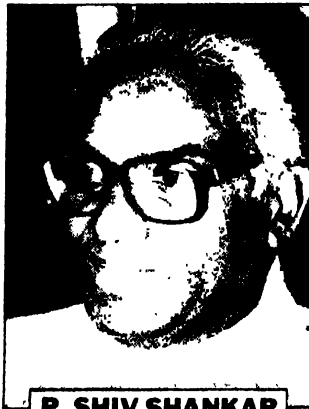
The fall of Arun Nehru and Arun Singh coincided with the ascendance of Satish Sharma. His rise has meant the partial eclipse of both M.L. Fotedar and P. Shiv Shankar. It has also affected bureaucrats Gopi Arora and Suman Dubey, who are not as important as they were



ARUN SINGH



SUMAN DUBEY



P. SHIV SHANKAR



M.L. FOTEDAR

Sharma had no political experience and seemed somewhat dim. And then, Sharma had other detractors within the palace, particularly Arun Singh. The former parliamentary secretary and minister of state for defence was still interested in the affairs of Amethi and together with Sanjay Singh, Rajiv's local man in the constituency, took a number of decisions that, perhaps, should have been left to Sharma.

It was not easy going for the Captain

in those days. He had to contend with the Arun Nehru-backed Fotedar within the palace and the powerful Arun Singh-Sanjay Singh team outside it. There was some good news for him though. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by Rajiv. It is possible that Rajiv felt that he should give his friend a measure of respectability. But it is just as possible that Rajiv felt he needed another political channel into the House, and the Rajya Sabha membership would give Sharma

afternoon, return to the house to check if everything was OK and leave at about 5.30 in the evening. It wasn't exactly high-powered work, nor was it very taxing. Fotedar, in contrast, used to remain at Race Course Road until very late, often until two in the morning.

By the end of 1986, things had begun to change for Sharma. Arun Nehru had fallen out of favour and quit the party the following year. In 1987, the govern-

ment faced an awful crisis. V.P. Singh had left the party and founded the Jan Morcha, Congress dissidence had reached unprecedented levels, President Zail Singh was contemplating the dismissal of Rajiv's ministry, and the government was rocked by the Bofors scandal. It was then that Sharma began playing a political role. The Prime Minister needed information about what was happening in the Congress. Partymen, in turn, needed to brief Rajiv about how they felt. Those who couldn't meet Fotedar—who was a busy man at most times but swamped with work then—began using Sharma as a conduit for passing on messages to the PM.

From then on Sharma was on a roll. When Zail Singh pulled out of the presidential race, the worst of the crisis was over. And Rajiv, who was very unhappy with the way Fotedar handled it, decided it was time that he went. The day after his presidential nominee, R. Venkataraman, was sworn in, Rajiv moved Fotedar out of his house and into the inconsequential steel and mines ministry.

With Fotedar, Arun Singh and Arun Nehru out of the way, Sharma grew more and more powerful. In time, the Prime Minister also began to rely less on his chosen bureaucrats. Gopi Arora—who Sharma dislikes—was one of Rajiv's principal political advisers when he was a secretary in the PMO; now he is not as important a member of Rajiv's team as he was. Nor is Rajiv's old Doon School chum Suman Dubey, who was taken on as an additional secretary in the information and broadcasting ministry a couple of years ago.

For Sharma though, palace politics was not quite over. By the end of 1988, Fotedar had wormed his way back into Rajiv's favour. He was consulted on the infamous Press Bill, sent to oversee the Tamil Nadu elections and recruited to troubleshoot in Madhya Pradesh. His MP operation won him a lot of praise. Fotedar managed to convince a stubborn Arjun Singh to accept Motilal Vora's nomination as chief minister.

Fearing that Fotedar would come back in a big way, Sharma pulled off a coup a few months ago to check this possibility. He was instrumental in arranging for the return of R.K. Dhawan, a move he thought would effectively counter the growing importance of Fotedar. Dhawan's re-entry, of course, was under consideration for a long time. Large numbers of Congressmen wanted him back and Rajiv himself was not averse to the idea. But it needed Sharma to clinch the issue. Sonia was deeply suspicious of Dhawan and no one but Sharma could have convinced her.

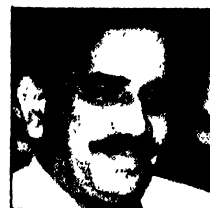
WHO'S WHO AT THE PALACE



SHEILA DIXIT

■ Her importance can be gauged by the number of briefs. She is the minister of state for parliamentary affairs, minister of state in the Prime Minister's office (PMO) and chairperson of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centenary Celebration Committee. Dixit coordinates political affairs on behalf of Rajiv and has recently taken on the role of a political adviser. A few months ago, she lobbied strongly and successfully to have Arjun Singh removed from the Madhya Pradesh chief ministership for his involvement in the Churhat lottery scam.

R.K. DHAWAN



■ Like Dixit, he also handles political affairs on behalf of Rajiv. Dhawan deals with party affairs in many states, scrutinises all the petitions submitted during Rajiv's morning *darshans* and briefs the Prime Minister on what Congressmen think of decisions taken by the party high command. He was appointed officer on special duty (OSD) in the cabinet secretariat at Sharma's behest and the two have teamed up to form a powerful combine.



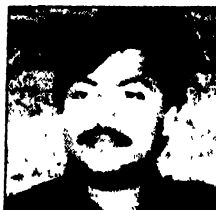
BUTA SINGH

■ The home minister is consulted on all administrative and political matters of any importance and there is hardly any area—with the exception of foreign affairs—in which he doesn't have a say. Buta is at his best playing hatchet-man and has been responsible for the removal of a number of chief ministers and curbing party dissidence in states with a heavy hand. The emergence of the Sharma-Dhawan combine has rattled him somewhat. But the wily Sardar—who is busy trying to befriend them—is still a force to reckon with.

GHULAM NABI AZAD



■ Despite suggestions that he has fallen out of favour, Azad remains an important member of Rajiv's political team. He is unarguably the most important AICC(I) general secretary and is consulted on all party decisions. Azad is directly in charge of handling the politics of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal, Punjab and Haryana. Apart from Sharma, he is the only other person who has been given an 'unofficial' RAX line (officially made available only to Cabinet ministers, secretaries and the like).



V. GEORGE

■ The Prime Minister's low-profile personal secretary is Rajiv's link with the rest of the party. No paper addressed to the PM reaches him without George's scrutiny and no one—with the possible exception of Sharma—can meet Rajiv without going through him. George does not take political decisions, but he passes on Rajiv's instructions to party members. Congressmen treat him with great respect as they know that the Prime Minister speaks through him.



(Clockwise from above) Protest against the Defamation Bill: Satish Sharma was a strong proponent; the Captain with his family: managing two households; supervising the construction of his farmhouse: suspiciously luxurious lifestyle



The Sharma-Dhawan nexus is a powerful one and capable of marginalising the other factions in the palace. Buta Singh is perhaps the only man who poses a threat. Sometime back, the Sardar scotched one of Sharma's peace initiatives in Punjab. The Captain had asked the Jain priest, Muni Sushil Kumar, to hold talks with the former *jathedar* of the Akal Takht, Darshan Singh Ragi, and negotiate with the extremists. The Muni's mission failed as it was met with organised protests, allegedly orchestrated by Buta Singh. Sharma is also upset with Buta Singh over another matter. He believes that it was the home minister who ordered the CBI raid on the house of Dharam Dutt,

chief administrator of the New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) and a close Sharma associate.

But Buta Singh is now trying to make up with Sharma—an indication perhaps

**No one dares cross
Satish Sharma's path
now. Industrialists
cower before him
and Congressmen
tremble at his sight**

of where the real power lies in the palace. Today, Sharma rules supreme. He has the reputation of being the Congress party's main fund collector and industrialists flock to his office to seek favours. And although he is not quite a political adviser, he is constantly in touch with partymen, listening to their problems and passing political messages to and from the Prime Minister.

Today, he even decides on political and bureaucratic appointments. For instance, he had Romesh Bhandari made Lt Governor of Delhi. The story goes that Bhandari, who was in charge of the AICC's foreign cell, approached Sharma after he was unsuccessful in getting a Rajya Sabha seat. Sharma got him the Lt Governor's job without any difficulty. In the field of civil aviation, hardly anything happens without Sharma's consent. The former pilot has got his own men appointed to key positions. Air-India's managing director, Rajan Jetley, for instance, is a Sharma protégé. Jetley would have almost certainly lost his job when a virtual war broke out between the management and the board if it hadn't been for Sharma's backing.

Sharma was also responsible for having R. Prasad, an old friend from his IA days, made managing director of the airline. He also secured the extension of Air Marshal Raje, the chairman of the National Airports Authority of India (NAAI), despite the institution of two courts of enquiry into allegations of mismanagement. Says a senior airline official: "The Captain has always stood by his friends."

Rajiv's attitude to Sharma has been different from that towards his other friends in one important respect. The Prime Minister has stood by him through all the scandals and at considerable personal political risk. Other friends have fallen by the wayside for apparently lesser 'crimes'. Amitabh Bachchan resigned his parliamentary seat over allegations of corruption levelled at his brother; Arun Nehru went for being overbearing and ambitious; and Arun Singh fell into disfavour for having his own views on how to handle the Bofors issue.

Sharma has survived worse. The power and influence he exercises stem largely from this. He is perceived as a survivor, a man who is here to stay, someone the Prime Minister will back, whatever the cost, to the end. This is what makes industrialists cower before him, partymen cringe and bureaucrats tremble at his sight. Who's afraid of Satish Sharma? Everybody, from the looks of it.

Mukund Padmanabhan/New Delhi

A tale of two parties

Or why the BJP is better than the Janata Dal

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has once again proved that it is the most consistent among the non-Communist Opposition parties. You may disagree with many of the party's policies but you cannot deny that its leadership has clear-cut views and aims. And, the BJP leaders do not take decisions which are opposed to their ideology.

The BJP, for instance, has opted to ally with the Shiv Sena and has decided to rake up the Ram Janambhoomi issue despite strong protests from the Janata Dal. V.P. Singh and his colleagues, who are only too eager to have the BJP with them during the parliamentary polls, on the other hand, have taken a stand which is confusing to say the least. Since the Dal is opposed to the Shiv Sena and because the BJP will have an alliance with Bal Thackeray's party in Maharashtra, the Janata Dal leadership has decided that the party will have no truck with the BJP in the state. But Singh is in favour of having an alliance with the BJP in most of the states of the Hindi belt. Isn't this a strange political situation? How can the BJP play so many roles at the same time: an untouchable in Maharashtra, a friend in the Hindi belt states and a ruling partner in Haryana?

The BJP, in contrast, has made its intentions very clear. It is not prepared to sacrifice its ideology for political gains. Its leaders make no secret about the fact that their party aspires to create a Hindu Rashtra. But the Janata Dal is neither communal nor secular. The leaders are a confused lot and that is why they have not been able to counter the communal or secessionist forces.

Moreover, the BJP opposes the Congress(I) since it differs with the ruling party's policies and programmes. It would continue to criticise the Congress(I) even if Rajiv Gandhi were to step down. But V.P. Singh and Arun Nehru would readily leave the Dal once they became Rajiv Gandhi's friends again.

Strategically, too, the BJP has scored over the Janata Dal. It has decided to go along with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra only because it is aware that such communal organisations could split the Hindu votes. But the Janata Dal is yet to make up its mind about striking an alliance with the BJP or the left parties. The Dal leaders are aware that ignoring the BJP in the Hindi belt states would be suicidal and that is why the Janata Dal has not branded the BJP as a communal party. But in West Bengal, the Janata Dal leaders proudly proclaim that the left is its natural ally.



V.P. Singh with BJP stalwarts; (below) Vajpayee with Advani: playing many roles

The Janata Dal is neither communal nor secular. The leaders are a confused lot and that is why they have not been able to counter the communal or secessionist forces



The time has, however, come for the Janata Dal to speak its mind and come out with its stand on communalism. The Dal cannot criticise the Shiv Sena and the RSS and yet have the BJP's Mangal Sain as the deputy chief minister of Haryana. Such contradictory stands will further erode the credibility of the Janata Dal. ■

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The campaign begins

The Congress(I) electioneering gets off to a confident start with Rajiv Gandhi's tour of the state

UTTAR
PRADESH

The run-up to the Lok Sabha polls has begun in UP. It is the first state where the Congress(I) high command has launched the party's election campaign with the Prime Minister and Congress(I) president, Rajiv Gandhi, embarking on a whirlwind tour of eight districts on 9 and 10 June. On the first day, he visited Bareilly and Kumaon while on 10 June he toured Pratapgarh, Saharanpur, Dehradun and

prepared speech and spoke extempore instead. Accompanied by UP chief minister N.D. Tiwari, the UP Congress(I) chief, Balram Singh Yadav, and AICC general secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad, Rajiv Gandhi launched a blistering attack on the Janata Dal, knowing full well that most of the Dal leaders—V.P. Singh, Ajit Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammad Khan and Sharad Yadav—belonged to UP. It appears that Gandhi is rather worried about his party's prospects in eastern UP following the leadership vacuum created by Veer Bahadur Singh's death. It was probably because of this that the Prime Minister toured places in eastern UP, assuring the Thakurs of the region that the Congress(I) was still very much with them.

Rajiv Gandhi based his campaign on

three planks: the Panchayati Raj and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the launching of the missile Agni, and, what he called, the attempts of some Opposition leaders to undermine the unity of the country. Speaking at a massive gathering at Singrauli, he said that the Janata Dal leaders opposed the Congress(I)'s proposal on the Panchayati Raj system and the launching of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana because they were not keen on giving villagers real political and economic powers. Regarding the successful lift-off of the Agni, the launching of which was put off on two previous occasions, Gandhi, in a clearly populist vein, accused the Opposition of trying to scuttle the missile programme because, he felt, it was not interested in seeing India emerge as a major power. He alleged that the Opposition had joined hands with certain foreign forces that were against such tests and were conspiring against the nation. In a vituperative outburst, Rajiv Gandhi repeated his earlier accusation that the Opposition was abetting the movement for Khalistan in Punjab by supporting the Anandpur Sahib Resolution and pleading the cases of those who conspired to assassinate Indira Gandhi.

Despite his tight schedule the Prime Minister held long meetings with Tiwari, Yadav and other state leaders in order to assess his party's political prospects in the state. According to reliable sources, he instructed the state Congress(I) to make the Panchayati Raj and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana the main campaign issues and to select 50 workers for each booth who are to trumpet the advantages of the two schemes. These workers are also to ensure that all Congress(I) supporters cast their votes.

Rajiv Gandhi is determined to keep the pressure on and this tour was only the opening move. In the next month he is expected to visit the state six times. He is also planning to travel to UP by road so as to establish a personal contact with people on the way and is going to lay the foundation stone of at least 12 big projects—the most important one being the Shahjahanpur fertiliser project—all on the eve of the elections. With the Prime Minister going great guns, the Congress(I) appears to be clearly in the lead in UP, as far as electioneering is concerned.

Rajiv Shukla/Lucknow



Rajiv Gandhi: on the campaign trail

parts of Garhwal. While in Singrauli, which falls within the constituency of the Congress Parliamentary Party general secretary Ram Pyare Panika, he dedicated the National Thermal Power Corporation's plant there to the nation and later, laid the foundation stone of a sugar mill and distillery in Kalkankar, Pratapgarh, which falls within the constituency of the Union commerce minister, Dinesh Singh.

It was for the first time in four years that Rajiv Gandhi undertook such a hectic tour of UP and it was also for the first time that he decided to shun

**In the next one month
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people**

Saikia goes down fighting

The former Assam chief minister loses the Rajya Sabha poll on a recount

ASSAM The defeat of the Congress(I) candidate and former Assam chief minister, Hiteswar Saikia, and the party's bitter reaction to it, was the culmination of a fortnight-long, bitterly-contested battle for the two Rajya Sabha seats held on 13 June. The seats had fallen vacant after Bahrul Islam and Dharanidhar Basumatary, both of the Congress(I), completed their terms.

Fate interceded when the returning officer declared two votes cast in his favour as invalid. Sources in the Congress(I), however, do not ascribe Saikia's defeat to his stars. They allege that some bigwigs of the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) almost bullied the officer into declaring the ballot papers as invalid, and have even declared that they would go to Guwahati High Court against the results, and file a complaint with the Election Commission.

The drama began right from the selection of the nominees. Beset with a fresh spurt of dissidence, the AGP was unable to decide on common candidates. In a house of 126, the AGP has 72 legislators. In order to win, a candidate required 42 first preference votes. While the victory of one AGP nominee was thus a foregone conclusion, the party required the support of at least 12 Opposition members to bag the second seat as well. The AGP began courting the Opposition parties like the United Minorities Front (UMF), now split into two factions—one led by Golam Osmani, the other by Santi Ranjan Dasgupta—the Congress(S) and the CPI(M). However, because of the fundamental differences between the AGP and these Opposition parties on matters such as the Assam Accord, the latter refused to back an AGP nominee. Instead, they suggested putting up a non-party candidate acceptable to both the AGP and them.

A section within the AGP was willing to accept this proposal. But as there were too many aspirants for the seats within the party, a consensus could not be arrived at. On 29 May, after a ballot was held within the legislature party, two names were finalised: those of an

Adivasi lawyer, David Ledger, and Biren Baishya, chairman of the State Warehousing Corporation.

Once the Opposition parties fell out with the AGP, the Congress(I), which was still to field a candidate, began to actively woo them. But these parties, notably the Congress(S) and the CPI(M), maintained that they not only had differences with the AGP, but with the Congress(I) as well. They advised the Congress(I) also to find a non-party consensus candidate if it wanted their support. Just as they were considering various names after the Congress(I) accepted their decision, came an unexpected bonanza for the latter. Eleven members of the Dasgupta faction of the UMK agreed to support a Congress(I) candidate unconditionally. On 31 May, after a telephone call from the party high command in Delhi, the Congress(I) announced that Hiteswar Saikia would

Baishya, in favour of Amritlal Basumatary, a Congress(S) MLA, whose nomination was also approved by the Osmani group of the UMF.

Thereafter Saikia was always at a disadvantage. David Ledger's victory was certain because the AGP had decided that 45 of its first preference votes would go in his favour, leaving 27 for Basumatary. With the support of the UMF, the Congress(S), the CPI(M) and one independent candidate, Basumatary was assured at least 40 votes. Saikia was left with only 34 definite votes.

But the Congress(I) camp was confident about Saikia's victory. It was hoping that some of the AGP dissidents would cross-vote to enable Saikia to win. Besides, there were the five still-to-be-decided votes on which the Congress(I) banked: three of the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), the traditional party of the Bodos, one belonging to the United Tribals Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF), also representing the Bodos, and one independent. The UTNLF, which is actively backing the



Hiteswar Saikia: losing in an unfair game?

DURGAPRASAD

be put up as its nominee.

This at once led to a change in the AGP's attitude. The party realised that with two of its own nominees and another fielded by the Opposition, the Congress(I)'s chances of winning had brightened, even though it had only 23 legislators. Had any other Congressman been in the fray, the AGP might have taken a gamble. But not with Saikia, their *bete noire*. The AGP promptly accepted the condition of a "consensus" candidate imposed by the non-Congress(I) Opposition parties earlier. The party withdrew its own nominee,

All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) in its ongoing agitation for a separate state, unilaterally supported Saikia. The PTCA, which was the unofficial ally of the AGP in the last Assembly elections, and on whom the AGP had pinned its hopes, declared a day before the elections that the party would not issue any directive to its members but would allow them to "vote according to their conscience". This decision seemed to vindicate earlier speculation that the top PTCA leaders were being "constantly pressured" by the Congress(I) heavyweights.

Ironically, Saikia's entry into the fray proved to be a blessing in disguise for the AGP. The Assamese still have not forgiven him for having come to power through an "illegal" election in 1983, and dissidents were unlikely to vote for him

Ironically, Saikia's entry into the fray proved to be a blessing in disguise for the AGP. The Assamese still have not forgiven him for having come to power through an "illegal" election in 1983, and dissidents were unlikely to vote for him, lest they incur the wrath of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the extremist outfit, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which consider him their enemy number one. Counting the five undecided votes, Saikia could, at the most, poll only 39 votes, provided of course, there was no cross-voting. When the counting ended on 13 June, it was found that Ledger had won with 45 votes. But totally unexpected were the 42 votes Saikia had bagged, leaving Basumatary with only 37: obviously, three legislators had cross-voted, but the general belief is that were not from the AGP, but from the other smaller parties.

The AGP did not take Saikia's victory lying down. When it was found that one vote cast in his favour was invalid, reducing Saikia's tally to 41, several senior AGP members including the MP, Dinesh Goswami, insisted on a recount. In the process, another vote polled in Saikia's favour was found to be invalid. Saikia thus lost the election and Basumatary, with Ledger's excess votes being passed on to him, won.

"Free and fair elections cannot be held while the AGP is in power in Assam," alleged the Union minister of state for home Santosh Mohan Dev, who was in Guwahati as an observer, at a press conference held a day after the results were declared. But whatever be the outcome, Rajya Sabha polls have proved the public memory of Saikia is not a short one.

Radiant, Guwahati

A matter of form

The Congress(I) prepares a questionnaire to assess its members' performance, but it is too complicated for most

ELECTIONS

What do a job application, census, school admissions and the Congress(I) have in common? The meticulous task of filling up forms, making declarations and signing on dotted lines. Distributing detailed questionnaires and putting the answers through computers is the best way to get what you want—be it the right student,

dates. Each MP is to visit an average of five Lok Sabha constituencies and submit his forms, duly filled up, to the AICC(I) in August. The choice of Rajya Sabha members was obvious: the party believes they are likely to be objective in their judgement of sitting Lok Sabha MPs and prospective candidates because they are not in the electoral race themselves.

The difficulty with the questionnaires is that they are probably beyond the ordinary Congressman's capacity to answer. It's all right for a party worker to write (on page 2/3 of form 1A) what his name, religion, sub caste, date of birth (Youth Congressmen beware), sex qualification and address is. But how exactly does the party plan to make use of his written "comments" (presumably

The most amusing part of the Congress(I) form is the question about the "individual's party affiliation" in 1969, 1977, 1978, 1980 and 1985. Partymen are also required to mention all the posts they hold

A facsimile of a part of the questionnaire

bureaucrat, employee or the winning Congress(I) candidate for the next parliamentary polls.

The elections may be six months away. But the Congress(I) has already stolen the lead over the Opposition—in collecting data and chalking out plans. While V.P. Singh and company grapple with their differences, rub their palms at the sight of newspaper headlines and talk of Rajiv Gandhi's plummeting credibility, the Congress(I) has launched a countrywide drive to find out what it should be talking about, who it should put up from where and how well it can hope to fare.

And how? By despatching 121 of its Rajya Sabha members to the states, armed with copies of a detailed questionnaire that they are to get filled up by party leaders, workers, members of the public and aspiring Lok Sabha candi-

on the political situation)? Good, simple English was never the local politician's forte. And that is the language the "comments" have to be written in.

The most amusing part of the Congress(I) form is the question about the "individual's party affiliation" in 1969, 1977, 1978, 1980 and 1985. (Imagine what someone like P.R. Das Munshi or Sharad Pawar or Bhajan Lal would have to say here!). Partymen are also required to mention all the posts they hold at present and have held in the past ("give important post only"), the organisations they have worked for, the place and duration.

Partymen also have to list the key issues they believe should be highlighted in the party's election campaign and write an explanatory note running into six lines on each. That, many think, is a tall order, too. Another page of the

questionnaire (form 5A) which aims to elicit information on the Opposition at the district level asks for a list of important Opposition leaders and the "main issues raised by the Opposition".

The questionnaire is also meant to be a voters' survey. It seeks to collect detailed information on each parliamentary constituency. This includes the total number of voters, the male-female break-up, percentage of scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other backward class (OBC) voters, the OBC with the largest number of voters, the OBC with the second largest number of voters and seven other minority communities, with the percentage of voters belonging to each.

The "survey" is only one channel of information for the Congress(I). This is independent of the reports on the party's prospects that AICC(I) observers and general secretaries are already busy with. An AICC(I) seminar and workshop has already filed a report recommending that the party's candidates for the next elections be selected with the help of district committees to ensure that they enjoy the confidence of the rank and file.

Among other things, the AICC(I) workshop recommends:

- active membership of the Congress be conferred on those who are able to recruit 25 primary members;
- all active members, after thorough scrutiny, should be issued with identity cards;
- party elections at the block and district levels be held as early as possible;
- if these organisational elections are not possible, a panel of names be drawn up in consultation with "honest workers" and senior members;
- it is desirable that the Congress be gradually converted into a cadre-cum-mass-based party, subject to the condition that the development of the cadre should be based on mass contact as well as training;

Sometime back Rajiv Gandhi had assured sitting Congress(I) MPs that they would not be denied the right to represent the party in the next polls again. But it is the results of the party survey, the AICC(I) reports and the government's own intelligence reports that he is waiting for to make the final decision. A subsidiary intelligence bureau (SIB) team is also compiling intelligence on the Congress(I)'s prospects in the next elections. The same SIB team had forewarned the PM about the party's drubbing in Tamil Nadu. This time round, the PM is only too eager to hear them out.

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

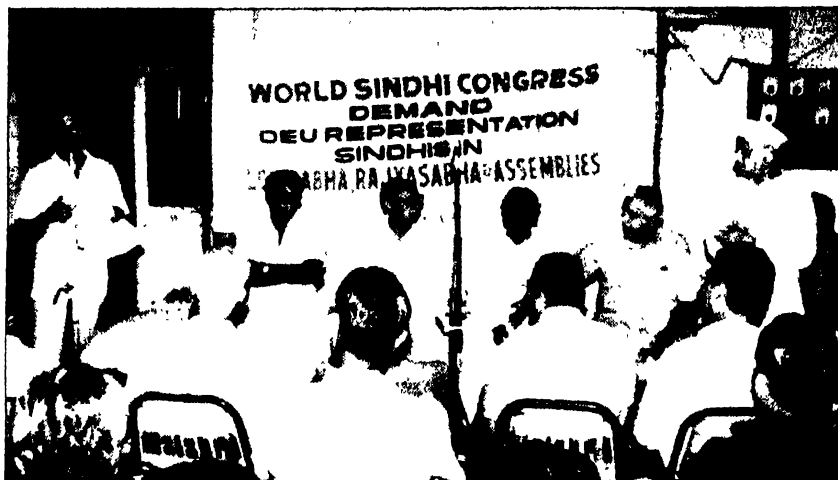
And now, the Sindhis

The community's leaders demand a separate state in Kutch

GUJARAT And now it is the turn of the Sindhis to demand a separate state for themselves. Leaders of the World Sindhi Congress (WSC), headquartered in Bombay, are touring India to establish contact with some 40 lakh Sindhis scattered in different parts of the country in order to garner support for their cause. They have already drawn up a lengthy list of demands and have threatened to launch direct actions such as dharna, hunger-strike, rallies and

raised by the WSC, however, is that it wants the government to declare the border district of Kutch, in Gujarat, as a Sindhi state, because 95 per cent of the population there happen to be Sindhi speaking. The other things the WSC is pressing for are the setting up of a Sindhi development board, a Sindhi university, making Sindhi a compulsory subject for Sindhi students and a special linguistic minority status for the community.

The WSC argues that their forebears had agreed to give up Sindh for the sake of the country's freedom and that many had gone to jail and some had even been hanged during the freedom struggle. In recognition of their contribution, Jawaharlal Nehru had inducted two Sindhis—Jairamdas Dolatram and R.K. Sidhwa—into his Cabinet. But, since 1979, there



A meeting of Sindhi leaders: planning direct action

even give a call for boycotting the elections, if their demands are not considered by 15 August. The WSC, however, is confident that its meeting with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, which is scheduled later this month, will be fruitful.

As part of their nationwide campaign, about 200 leaders of the community met in Ahmedabad recently to take part in a seminar on 'Political Rights of Sindhis', in which they chalked out their plan of action. The WSC has demanded the representation of eminent Sindhis in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, the state Assemblies and local government bodies as part of their political right, informs WSC president K.T. Rohra, who feels that Sindhis today are a demoralised lot and that their ancient culture is fast perishing.

The most important demand being

have been no Sindhis worth naming in Union and state Cabinets. This has prompted the WSC to demand two Union ministers, two state ministers in each state, two governors, two ambassadors and two trade commissioners from among the Sindhis. "Even tiny Lakhshadweep, with just 21,205 voters, has one representative in the Lok Sabha, but 40 lakh Sindhis have none," laments Rohra, who feels that reserved parliamentary and Assembly constituencies should be created for them.

Not all Sindhis, however, are inclined to back the WSC. Says Belraj Jumanji, a prominent Sindhu leader from Ahmedabad, "All we seek is the nomination of Sindhis to government boards and corporations. Sindhis in Gujarat will not support any agitation—violent or otherwise—for a separate state or other sectarian demands."

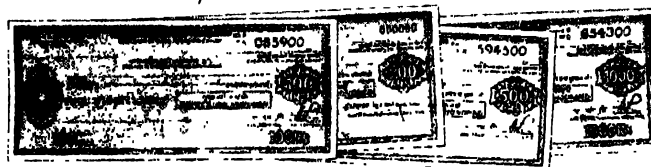
Mahesh Trivedi/Ahmedabad



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Much ado about nothing

The PM quashes speculation about the setting up of an MPs' panel to help the Governor

KARNATAKA

It had all the trappings of an election campaign. When Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi came to Bangalore on 14 June to participate in the convention on local urban bodies, the city was garishly decked up "like a bride", as one local paper put it. Huge amounts of Congress funds were spent on erecting arches, putting up cut-outs of Rajiv and Indira Gandhi, and preparing elaborate floats, depicting Rajiv's proposals on electoral reforms and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. State government buses were withdrawn from their regular routes and were re-deployed to lug in crowds to the rally at the Kanteerava stadium that paralysed life in downtown Bangalore.

The conclusion was inescapable: the countdown to the elections had begun. Yet, for those seeking clear signals from the Prime Minister, the messages seemed scrambled. Gandhi told party workers: "You have to face both Assembly and parliamentary elections very soon. Perhaps, one after another in a short span of time." Although this was a lot more forthcoming than his stock statement that "the governor will decide", it was far from being explicit. In fact, it has given rise to more speculation than ever before.

The term "soon" lends itself to different interpretations. It could mean that the elections would be held ahead of schedule or at the time when it is actually scheduled, which itself is not very far away. The situation has become all the more confusing due to the Congress(I) and the government's flirtation with a proposal to create an advisory panel of MPs to "help" Governor P. Venkatasubbiah's administration.

It all started with an orchestrated demand by some factions of the Karnataka Congress(I) to set up a panel of MPs. The flamboyant Congress MP from the state, H.N. Nanjagowda, had written to the Governor in this regard. Even the sedate KPCC(I) president, Veerendra Patil, had asked the Congress(I) high command to announce the formation of

such a committee, obviously under pressure from his restless colleagues in the state. A humiliated Venkatasubbiah protested that such a move would be unprecedented. But the pressure groups seem to have won. An "official spokesman" of the home ministry told the press on 10 June that the Union government had decided to constitute a parliamentary consultative committee to help in the administration of Karnataka.

The state Congress(I) was jubilant. Of

argued that if the elections were to be held by September i.e. within six months of President's Rule, there would be no point in constituting a parliamentary panel to help the Governor run the administration.

But the controversy was defused in an astonishing manner. Rajiv Gandhi told the press in Bangalore, "I have heard of no such committee. I know nothing about it. Nobody else has spoken to me about the committee. I have not cleared any such committee." Who, then, had given the green signal to the official spokesman to come out with such a



Bangalore city spruced up for Rajiv's visit: electoral stunts

the 28 Lok Sabha seats from Karnataka, only four are held by the Janata Dal members who survived a Congress(I) sweep in 1984. The proposed consultative committee was to have Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members in a two-to-one proportion. The reason that made the Congress(I) ecstatic, infuriated the Janata Dal. Dal leaders Ramakrishna Hegde and dismissed chief minister S.R. Bommai charged that the decision was taken to consolidate "Congress rule". They also feared that the elections might not be held on time. The Dal leaders

briefing? And how could Rajiv Gandhi not have known of such a proposal? Congress(I) leaders in the state seem baffled by these questions. When an announcement regarding the MPs panel was made in New Delhi, all newspapers in Karnataka front-paged the story. In the three days between the announcement and Rajiv Gandhi's visit which killed the controversy, the belief had gained ground that Assembly elections will not be held on time, at least not before the Lok Sabha polls.

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

Kidnap drama

CM Mazumdar and home minister Barman lock horns over the abduction of a college girl

TRIPURA

Congress(I) leaders in Tripura have started a slanging match between themselves, following the kidnapping of a college girl in Agartala by some anti-social elements. The kidnappers are reported to be close to the lieutenants of chief minister Sudhir Ranjan Mazumdar. The girl, Kakoli Ray, was abducted on the evening of 9 June and released the following day.

The 24-hour drama sparked off massive demonstrations in the state capital and intensified the feud between Mazumdar and the state home minister, Samir Ranjan Barman, who is said to be Mazumdar's main opponent in the state Congress(I).

In a written statement issued to the press after her release, Kakoli Ray alleged that some anti-social elements had stormed into their house and forced her into a waiting jeep at gunpoint, while her father, a government employee and a prominent Congress supporter, was a helpless spectator. She alleged that she had heard her captors mention Mazumdar's name several times and that Jiban Saha, personal assistant of the chief minister, had come to meet the kidnappers at their hideout. Later that day, Kakoli was put in an autorickshaw after nightfall and dropped in front of her house.

Meanwhile, on the morning of 10 June, Kakoli's father met home minister Barman and requested him to trace the

missing girl and student leaders Subal Bhaumik and Ashis Saha, known for their anti-Mazumdar stance, organised demonstrations in front of East Agartala police station. Saha complained that the kidnappers were involved in "dastardly crimes before but could get away with them because they were close to the highest circles".

Though the girl was released on 10 June, tension continued to mount the following day as Bhola Saha and Rimal Rudra Pal, two of Mazumdar's aides and Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (PCC-I) members, accused Barman of trying to politicise the issue and defame the chief minister. They even hinted that Barman's son was involved in several crimes.



Sudhir Ranjan Mazumdar

The aides of chief minister Mazumdar accused home minister Barman of politicising the abduction issue

for their role in rescuing the girl, Kakoli has made it known that the police did precious little in the matter.

Meanwhile, the officer-in-charge of the East Agartala police station has been asked to go on a long leave, and the CPI(M), the main Opposition party, has demanded the resignation of both Mazumdar and Barman for having failed to provide security to citizens.

Subir Bhaumik/Agartala

Sons and fathers

A minister finds himself in trouble over his son's antics

RAJASTHAN

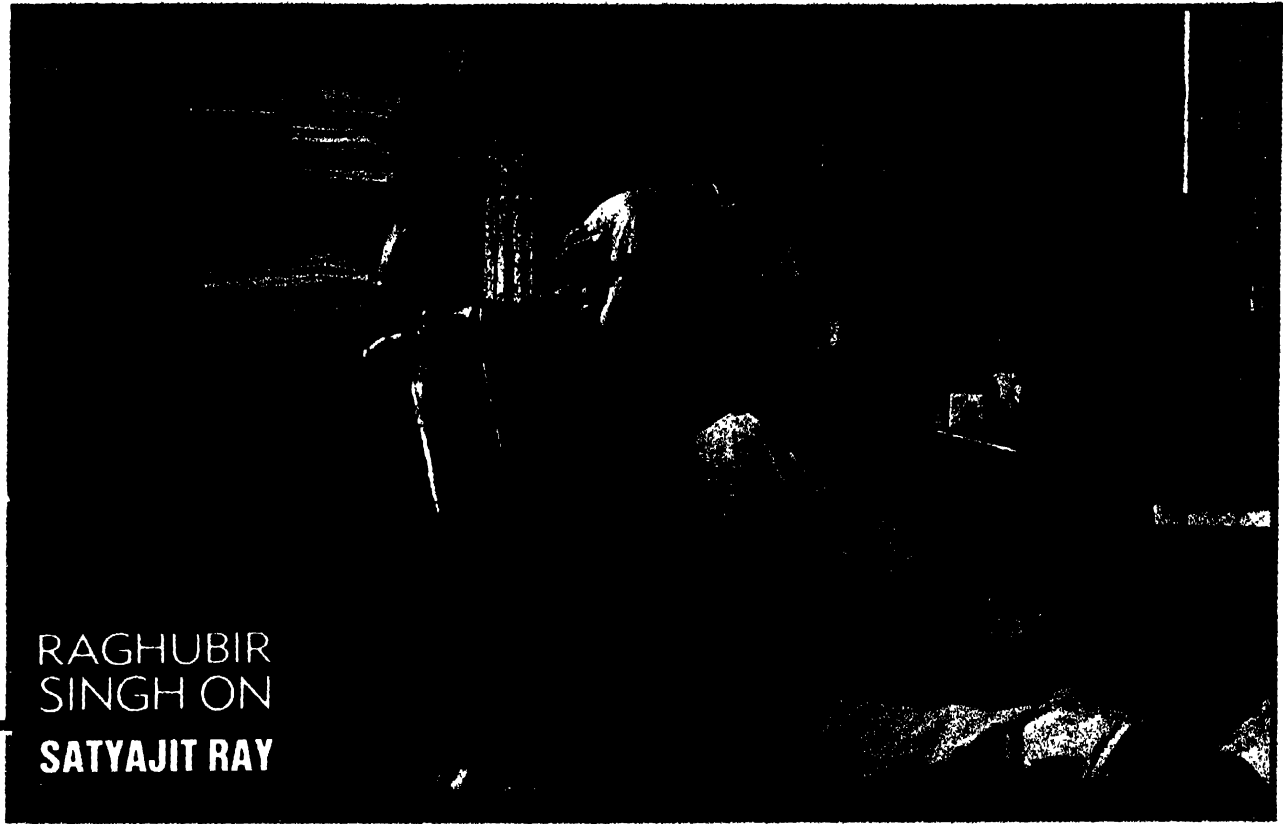
Sons and daughters can often cause endless embarrassment to politicians as Ramsingh Vishnoi, the recently-inducted cooperative minister in Rajasthan, must have realised by now. Nearly three-and-a-half years ago, Vishnoi had to resign from the cabinet over an incident involving his daughter, Indra. Now, just when his political fortunes seemed to look up the hapless minister has once again found himself in the midst of a controversy. And, this time, the cause of Vishnoi's worry is his son, Parasram.

It all happened on 8 June, the day the Rajasthan cabinet was expanded and Vishnoi recalled from oblivion. Immediately after the swearing-in ceremony, Parasram and his friends decided to celebrate Vishnoi's reinstatement. Drowned in liquor the boisterous gang set off for Vidyayak Nagar, the colony of the legislators in Jaipur.

In Vidyayak Nagar, Parasram and his friends climbed the balcony of a house and began chucking empty liquor and beer bottles at random. By now, senior police officials of the capital came to know of the incident. They rushed to the spot, and arrested three boys, but Parasram managed to make a get-away. At the time of going to press, the minister's son is still at large, though the police have registered a case against him.

In fact, Ramsingh Vishnoi has a knack for running into trouble. His first stint as minister did not last for even a year as he had to resign after press reports accused him of torturing his daughter, Indra. The girl, it was alleged, was married off at the age of seven, and after she grew up, Indra refused to live with her husband and wanted to marry someone else. And, when Indra seemed unrelenting, the minister began to torture her physically and mentally. The exposure created a public furore which ultimately led to Vishnoi's exit from the state cabinet. It remains to be seen if Ramsingh Vishnoi will manage to wriggle out of the present crisis.

Milap Chand Dandia/Jaipur



RAGHUBIR
SINGH ON
SATYAJIT RAY

Return of a master

Ganashatru is Satyajit Ray's first film in five years and marks an astonishing return to form

What do you do if you are one of the world's greatest filmmakers and then suddenly, your doctors tell you that your heart condition is such that you can only make a film if you do not exert yourself at all? And if their definition of 'exertion' is such that you are not allowed to shoot outdoors; not permitted to handle the camera; and given a bare minimum of 45 days to complete the picture?

Well, if you are Satyajit Ray, 68, then you resist the temptation to rest on your laurels, content that history will judge you as one of the greatest directors ever, and you try your hardest to find a way around the medical restrictions. And, of course—if you are Satyajit Ray—you pull it off and make a film that leaves the critics raving!

Confronted with intimations of his mortality, Ray chose to go back to his youth. During his college days, he was an Ibsen fan and was particularly partial

to *An Enemy Of The People*. Five years ago he rediscovered the play and after listening to the doctors and their lists of conditions, resolved to adapt it for his 26th film. (There is an—admittedly off-beat—precedent for this. Told that he had cancer, Steve McQueen chose to film his own version of *Enemy Of The People* a few years ago.)

Ganashatru, as Ray finally called it (English title: *Public Enemy*), sticks to Ibsen in that the action is confined within walls (the doctors had their way on outdoor locations) and the broad structure follows the play's five acts. But Ray has adapted Ibsen so that the note of dark

■
Satyajit Ray with son Sandeep: on the sets of Ganashatru



Photographs: Raghubir Singh

pessimism that ends *Enemy Of The People* is muted in *Ganashatru*. Ibsen's protagonist, Dr Stockmann, faces opposition from bigots and ends the play alone. Ray's version of the character, Dr Gupta, faces the same kind of adversity but at the end, a ray of hope filters through, in the form of a few local youths who keep him from being alone.

The change is a significant one and Ray justified it to British critic Derek Malcolm. "The most pessimistic of my films was probably *The Middleman (Jana Aranya)*, which was also about corruption. Now, I prefer to be more optimistic. There are still honest people in India, though I wish there were more. I still have a feeling that the best of our nation will come to the top." About Ibsen's ending, he was categorical: "I don't feel it is appropriate."

While the debt to Ibsen is unmistakable, Ray has considerably Indianised the theme. At the centre of *Ganashatru* is a temple in a small town near Calcutta. The local deity's *charanamrit* (holy water) is said to be endowed with supernatural powers and the townspeople queue up to drink it. A hepatitis epidemic results and a Dr Gupta traces it to the *charanamrit*. His efforts to temper religion with hygiene result in him being transformed from a local hero to a public enemy. In the end, the obscurantists win, but Gupta has found a few supporters.

The theme is strikingly appropriate to India and approximates Ray's own views on the subject. "Pollution," he says, "is on everybody's lips and not just in India. So I am not exactly making an art film. But then, I have never thought of my films as art films—they are just films."

It is futile to pretend that the doctors' restrictions have not had an impact on the film, finally. At Cannes, where it was shown to a respectful reception last month, some critics commented on the "set-piece" quality of its flow. It is unusual for a film to be restricted to the studio and for a director to use a bare minimum of sets. The danger with such an approach is that the finished film can end up resembling a filmed version of a stage play. Nowhere is Ray's mastery of the medium more apparent than in his ability to make *Ganashatru* transcend these limitations. The end result is undeniably cinematic. A skilful use of camera angles breaks the monotony of limited sets and the direction paces the film so that it never gets claustrophobic.

All this was managed in just 28 days! As it turned out, Ray did not even need the 45 days allotted to him by the doctors. Nor did he ever over-extend

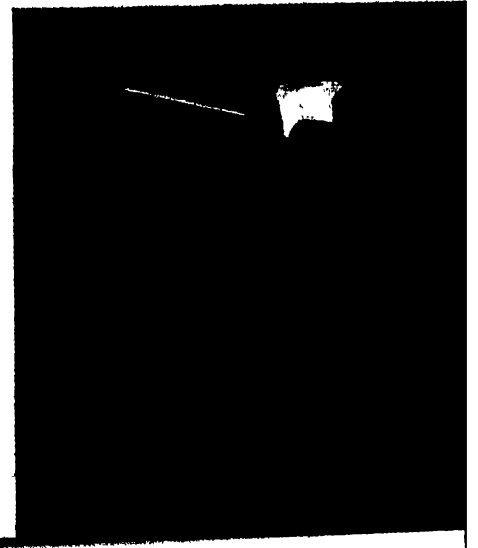
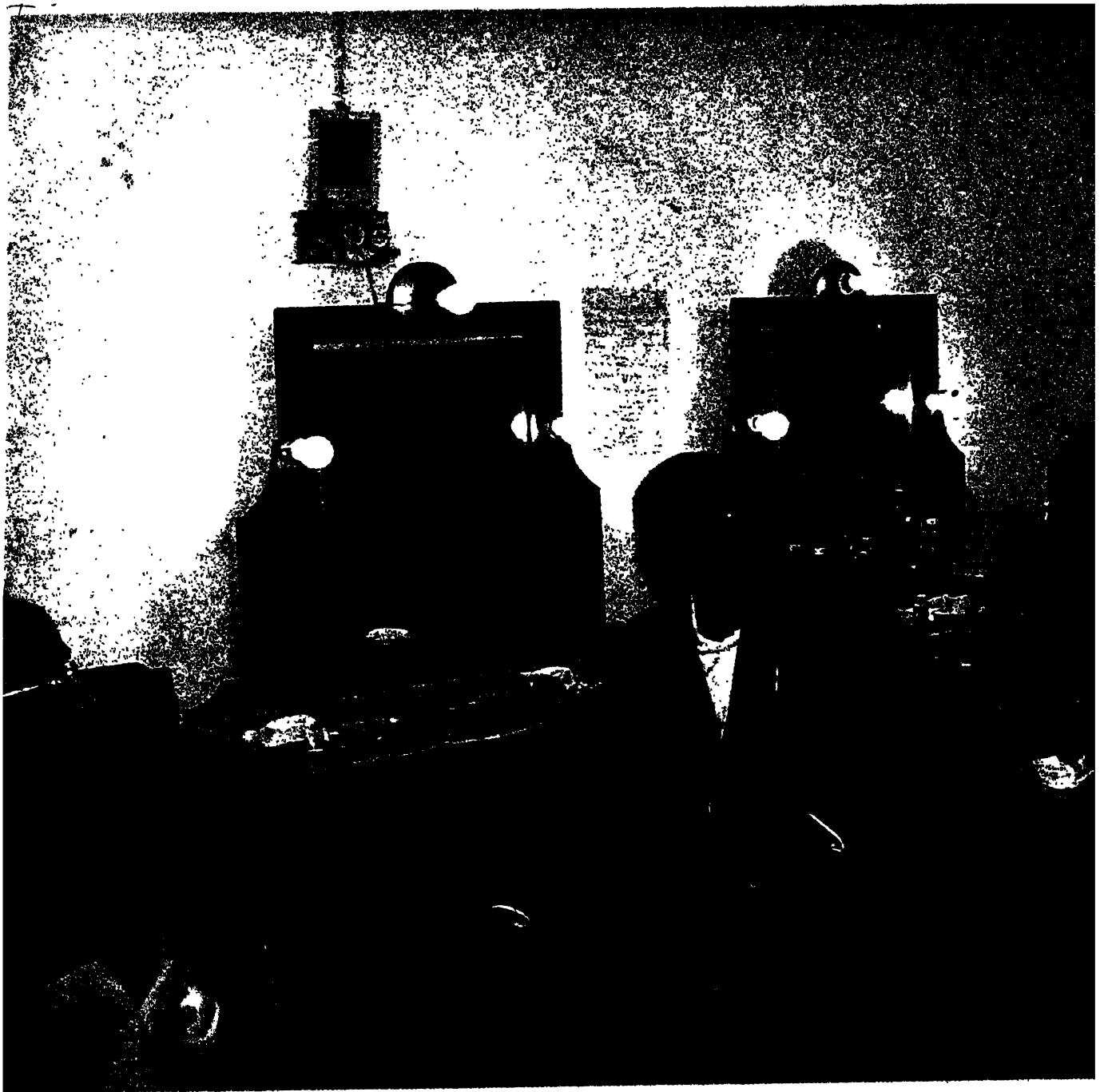




RAGHUBIR SINGH ON SATYAJIT RAY

Ray has adapted Ibsen so that the note of dark pessimism that ends *An Enemy Of The People* is muted in *Ganashatru*

(Clockwise from top left) The director at rest: finding a way around medical restrictions; Ray directing Soumitra Chatterjee: an old faithful; Satyajit Ray on location: action confined indoors





RAGHUBIR SINGH ON SATYAJIT RAY

his cast or crew, calling "pack-up" by four on most days.

Nevertheless, the doctors took no chances. Throughout the schedule, an ambulance stood outside the studio and Ray was under constant medical supervision. Finally, of course, the magic of the filming got to the doctors too, and when they were not taking Ray's blood pressure, they got as involved in the shooting as the rest of the crew.

Some of the credit for this must go to the repertory company that Ray has built up over the years. That old faithful, Soumitra Chatterjee plays the doctor. Dhritiman Chatterjee (of *Pratidwandi* fame) is another Ray discovery who



(Clockwise from top left) The director with his cast: a repertory company built over years; the filmmaker: a reflective moment; the cinematic genius at work: mastery of the medium; Satyajit Ray: in a contemplative mood

returns after a sizeable gap.

Others in the cast include Mamata Shankar who plays the doctor's daughter, Ruma Guha Thakurta who plays his wife, and Deepankar De as a local newsman who first, promises to help the doctor and then, lets him down. Also featured is Rajaram Yagnik, an actor from the Hindi stage, whose first Ray film this is.

Ganashatru will be released in Paris on 28 June, and Ray and family will fly to France for the gala première, which is being organised by Gerard Depardieu, the French actor.

Ray has always had a faithful French

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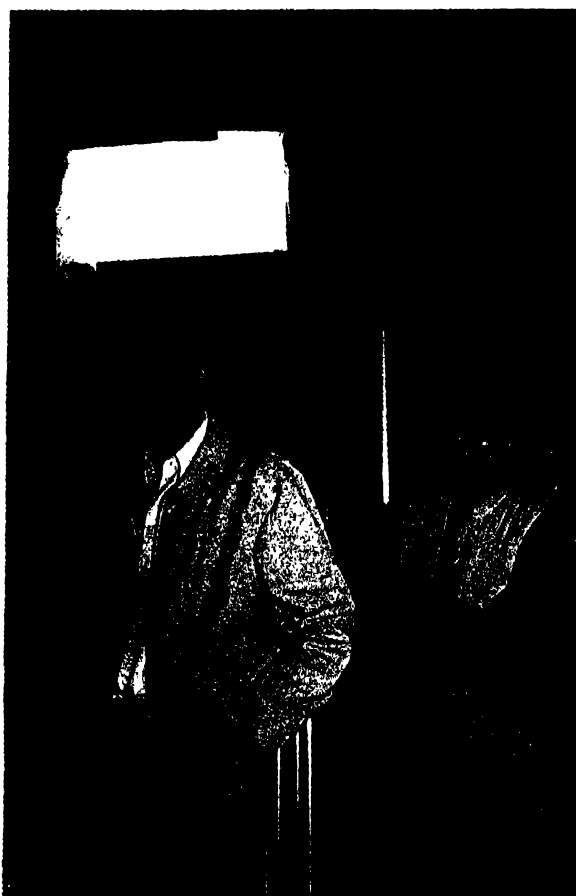
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RAGHUBIR SINGH ON **SATYAJIT RAY**



(Above) On the sets of *Ganashatru*: set-piece quality of the flow; (right) the director with his son Sandeep: a family that works together

following (as President Mitterand's trip to Calcutta to present him with the Legion d'honneur demonstrates), and Depardieu has already taped a long interview with him for French television which will be telecast just before the première to whip up interest in the film.

All of this, plus the fact that the film got to Cannes before most Indian critics had seen it has led to charges that Ray is catering to a foreign audience rather than to those who actually speak the language the film is made in.

It is a familiar criticism—the same charge was levelled when *Ghare Baire* was first shown abroad—but not one that worries Ray. "I always make my films primarily for my own audience. I've never known what kind of film will export well," he has said. He gives the example of *Jalsaghar* which he says is "totally Indian in form, content and ethos", but is now the most popular of his films in France.

Certainly, the demand that Ray should première everything in Calcutta does seem a little parochial: a great artist's work transcends national boundaries. Nevertheless, Indian audiences will have to wait a few months before they can make up their minds about the film that the critics at Cannes were so impressed by.

Sudeshna Roy/Calcutta

The story of a victim

A perfectly healthy blood donor is made out to be an AIDS carrier and harassed

It could go down as one of the most shameful foul-ups in Calcutta's medical history. A man who had no trace of the AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome) anti-body in his blood, was declared to be a carrier of the killer virus by experts; a vernacular daily published his photographs along with reports which branded him as a maniac at large, thereby whipping up mass frenzy against the members of his family; and the administration, which should, in the normal course of events, have had the man admitted to a hospital, chose to put him in prison instead.

The unfortunate victim, forty-year-old Swapan Ganguly, moonlighted as a professional blood donor at the Assembly of God Church Hospital & Research Centre (AGCHRC), in central Calcutta. Sometime in the month of March, Ganguly donated blood to the hospital's blood bank, samples of which, along with those of other donors, were sent to the National Institute of Communicable and Enteric Diseases (NICED) for Elisa tests to check for the presence of the AIDS virus in them. On 31 March, the tests revealed that one of the samples was seropositive, i.e., it contained AIDS anti-bodies, proving that the donor was carrying the AIDS virus. The NICED informed AGCHRC of its finding and asked for the name of the donor. According to Dr. S.C. Pal, director of the institute, AGCHRC used to send the blood samples under certain codes, without naming the donors. In this case, however, the NICED insisted on more details to which AGCHRC responded by saying that the donor was a 28-year-old male (when Swapan Ganguly is much older), but withheld the name. The NICED then sent the relevant sample to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, for what is known as the 'Western Blot' test, considered to be a more fool-proof method. The NIV confirmed NICED's finding.

On 17 April, the test reports were officially sent to AGCHRC, and, on the following day, the hospital authorities informed the health department of the government of West Bengal of the matter. They requested the government to trace the man, who was stated to be one Swapan Ganguly, a resident of Sonarpur, a small town to the south of

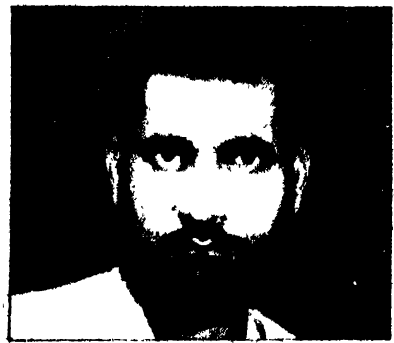
Calcutta, in the South 24-Parganas district. Apparently, the health department bosses knew nothing of the case as the AGCHRC letter lay buried beneath a pile of mail in the Writers' Buildings. It was only after *The Statesman* reported the case on 27 May, without, however, naming Ganguly or his whereabouts, that the authorities got wind of the matter. The chief medical officer (CHO) of South 24-Parganas was summoned and asked to look for the man, and, was, in a way, sent on a wild goose chase, as AGCHRC had not been able to provide Ganguly's exact address. The CMO managed to trace three men of the same name in the area, but not the right one.

May, Ganguly was held by the police.

First, he was locked up in Sonarpur police station, as if he were a criminal. Next, he was taken to AGCHRC, where the authorities referred him to the state health department at Writers' Buildings. From there he was sent to the School of Tropical Medicine (STM), where samples of his blood were taken. And while tests were being carried out, Ganguly was shifted from the police station and put under judicial custody in a solitary cell at the Alipore Central Jail.

A few days later, after carrying out successive tests, the STM came out with a startling revelation: the tests had proved the samples negative; the man

The members of Ganguly's family were hounded and humiliated by ignorant neighbours who harboured a ton of misconceptions about the disease and had no knowledge of how it spreads



It was then that the police was asked to take over. The manhunt, which turned into a witch-hunt, had begun.

Initially, the police was as much in the dark as the health department. But on 30 May, Ganguly was back at the blood bank. Said R.N. Dutta, an AGCHRC haematologist: "Ganguly came in response to a letter we sent him asking him to present himself for some 'special' tests," though Ganguly's wife, Nilima, said that they received no such letter. At the hospital, Ganguly was identified to the reporter of a vernacular daily who, according to the hospital authorities, happened to be present at the spot by chance. That very evening, the scribe, together with a lensman, reached Ganguly's home and persuaded him to be photographed on the ruse that the pictures would be needed for giving him a job which he posed to have on hand. Next morning a report appeared in the daily, along with Ganguly's photographs, making him out to be a social outcast and the most dangerous man at large. On 31

was no carrier of the AIDS virus.

But while this behind-the-scenes drama was in progress, the members of Ganguly's family were hounded and humiliated by ignorant neighbours who harboured a ton of misconceptions about the disease and had no knowledge of how it spread. Though it has been scientifically established that AIDS-infected persons can move freely in society so long as they make some behavioural changes (abstain from sexual intercourse and avoid blood contacts with others), Ganguly's neighbours, their irrational fears deepened by mindless reports, were out to evict the family from the locality. Nilima Ganguly, Swapan's wife, broke down as she recalled the night their house was besieged by an angry, abusive mob that screamed and hurled the foulest of invectives at them.

But why was Swapan held by the police and being incarcerated? The health department had no clear explanation to offer, but said it might have been for the sake of his safety.

Anish Gupta/Calcutta



Readying for take-off?

Will the induction of a new MD and more aircraft solve the problems that plague Indian Airlines?

Indian Airlines is big. Forty-five aircraft flying over ten million passengers a year to 67 destinations. And it is going to get bigger. More planes, more passengers and more routes by the end of this financial year. Nineteen Airbus Industrie A-320 planes—each capable of carrying 168 passengers—will be joining the Indian Airlines (IA) fleet by March 1990, and 12 more by 1993. The number of passengers flown is expected to increase by one lakh this year and 21 new routes will open up. In the Nineties, IA will spend Rs 10,000 crores to modernise and expand.

These impressive figures, however, do not compensate for the airline's equally unimpressive achievements. Indian Airlines is inefficient, overstaffed and remarkably unprofessional, with senior executives more interested in battling each other than the ills that plague the airline. Net profit has declined in the past year and is likely to slide even lower. Flying IA seems like a night-

mare. However, the country's largest domestic airline has now embarked on an ambitious growth path. But whether it can fly out of the stormy patches and go on to become a true airline of the 1990s is the biggest question which confronts it.

IA's chances of success hinge on two crucial factors: modern Airbus Industrie A-320 aircraft joining the fleet and a thorough overhaul of its management

style.

Four of the A-320s—built by a consortium of four European aerospace companies—are expected to join IA's stable by the end of this month. They will gradually take the load off overworked Boeing 737s and the much larger Airbus A-300s. By December, the A-320 will link the metros to tourist destinations such as Srinagar. This should help ease the problem of strained

INDIAN AIRLINES' PROFITABILITY			
	<u>1987 - 88</u> (Actuals)	<u>1988 - 89</u> (Revised)	<u>1989 - 90</u> (Budget estimates)
Total revenue	925.49	943.20	1142.60
Total expenses	849.89	905.10	1133.45
Net profit (After tax)	30.10	14.10	8.85

(Profitability is steadily decreasing)

Airbus A-320s will soon be part of the IA fleet: will they solve problems of capacity?



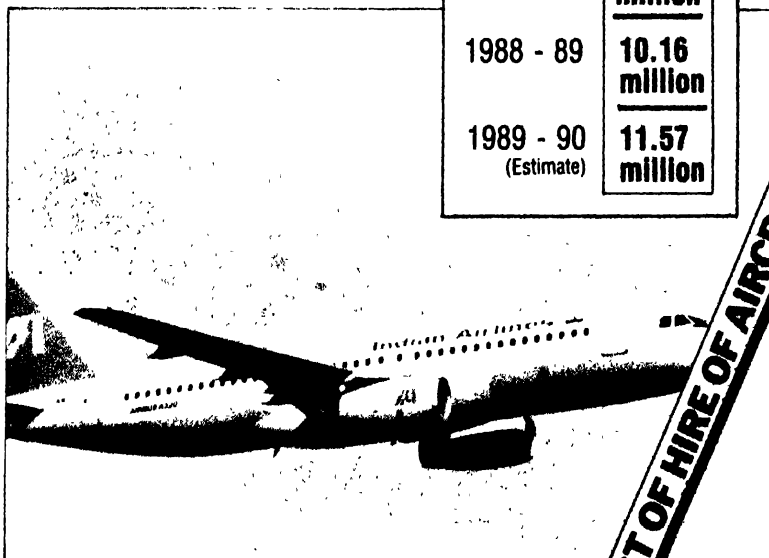
capacity, which is the result of bird-hits, mechanical defects (these two factors are responsible for the grounding of ten per cent or more of the planes at any given time) and the crash of a Boeing last year. The problem is so acute that IA has been forced to lease six 737s, one A-300 and one aircraft each from Aeroflot and Ariana Afghan Airlines. In addition, it operates a Druk Air jet between important cities such as Delhi, Calcutta and Bangalore four days a week. (Aircraft leases will cost IA Rs 76 crores this year.)

However, there are some technical problems with the A-320s, say aviation engineering experts. Aircraft engines start losing power after temperatures go above the International Standard Atmosphere (ISA) of 15°C. That means they can carry fewer passengers and smaller



PASSENGERS FLOWN

1987 - 88	10.4 million
1988 - 89	10.16 million
1989 - 90 (Estimate)	11.57 million



COST OF HIRE OF AIRCRAFT

This leads to another question about opting for the A-320s. When IA signed a contract with Airbus Industrie in March 1986, it was for 19 of the aircraft. (The cost of inducting these planes is Rs 1,237 crores.) As part of the contract, IA had the option to buy 12 more, provided the option was exercised by the middle of this year. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi gave the go-ahead at the end of May. The new deal is worth Rs 870 crores. The question being asked is why IA decided to go in for 12 more planes when even the first lot has not taken to Indian skies.

An IA official says that both IA and Airbus Industrie were apprehensive of possible problems, which could lead to the turning down of the option. Then, Boeing—whose offer of new generation 757 planes was rejected in favour of Airbus' A-320s—would have been back in the reckoning. The Boeing 757 runs on proven General Electric engines. The decision to exercise the option signifies two things: one, that Boeing has been kept out, and two, that the government which has been partial to things European, particularly French, over the past few years still feels that way. No one speaks openly of kickbacks. (Aerospatiale, the French aerospace company, is a major executor of the Airbus project. The others are British Aerospace, Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm of West Germany and the Spanish company CASA. Boeing has openly criticised Airbus—which is heavily subsidised by the respective European governments—for using political clout to rake in orders all over the world.)

Another problem with the A-320 contract is the fact that IA will be swamped

1988 - 89
Rs 20.15 crores

amounts of fuel and cargo. Most aircraft engines are rated for 25°C, as are the International Aero Engine-manufactured V2500 engines that will power the A-320s. The problem in India is that temperatures in most regions exceed 25°C practically round the year. Experts say that high temperatures would adversely affect the functioning of the V2500 engine more than that of other engines. This may mean that the A-320s will be able to carry lesser loads, adding to capacity constraints.

1987 - 88
Rs 12.10 crores



with planes: 31 aircraft in three years. While no one in aviation circles—both in the government and private industry—denies that IA requires aircraft desperately, many wonder whether IA will be able to absorb so many aircraft suddenly, and be able to match them with support services like maintenance facilities, trained technicians, hangars, and increase in seats. From a marketing point of view, IA's demand is so high that any amount of new aircraft can be put to use immediately—and flogged for six flights a day all round the year—and there would still be a demand for more aircraft. But for a while, some of the new aircraft may have to sit idle simply because IA doesn't have the facilities to handle an expansion. Its maintenance base in New Delhi is expanding to accommodate the A-320s as well as handle other fleet aircraft, and maintenance facilities are being set up in the airports of different metros. But work is slow. And the first A-320 is due any day—even though it experienced problems two weeks ago with its landing gear during test flights at the Airbus plant in Toulouse, France.

But besides problems of capacity, IA has other troubles. Inefficient management is a major one. Currently, headstrong unions—of pilots, engineers, et al—get their way. For instance, a 33 per cent hike in wages this year, without assuring the management anything in return by way of increased productivity. Some call it a sell-out on the part of the management, others call it buying peace.

Whatever it may be, the fact is that it is the poor management style of the airline that leads to most of its problems. Besides, back-stabbing among its staffers and political interference have dragged IA down even further. And all this has been happening for years.

When Captain Chaddha took over as managing director (MD) in 1982, he had with him two professional deputies, Capt. B.K. Bhasin (director of flight safety) and Capt. V.K. Mehta (who oversaw engineering, pilots' training, traffic, ground support and the commercial department). For five years—till mid-1987—Chaddha and his deputies formed a disciplined team, who maintained a firm grip on the unions and regional departments. Trouble started in 1985 when Jagdish Tytler became minister for civil aviation. Chaddha and Tytler did not get along. Tytler—who takes more than an active interest in anything he does—started interfering in the day-to-day functioning of the airline, and Chaddha was often bypassed.

That is when aviation circles began to hear more and more of R. Prasad, IA's present managing director. Prasad started lobbying to succeed Chaddha as MD with Motilal Vora's support. Tytler, on the other hand, backed Gerry Pais, an accounts man. Pais also enjoyed Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi's confidence. Finally, it was Pais who was appointed MD in 1987. After his induction, Tytler wanted to appoint only one deputy managing director. He recommended P.N. Kumar—an extremely competent engineer—but the pilots' lobby wanted Capt. N. Ramachandran. Tytler conceded and appointed both of them.

Prasad, not wishing to be left out, took the help of then civil aviation secretary, S.S. Sidhu. He was appointed deputy director, finance. When Tytler questioned Sidhu about the appointment, the latter said the minister had cleared it. Till date, Tytler maintains he never did. All three deputy managing directors were appointed simultaneously in October 1987.

Tytler's departure in 1987 made things easier for Prasad, especially as his mentor, Motilal Vora, took over as

minister. Prasad constantly stalled proposals put forward by the two other deputy directors as he—as head of finance—had a major say in all matters.

Pais was shaky right through his tenure, despite his prime ministerial connection, and there were constant rumours that he would be sacked. Always considered an ineffectual manager, he never really took complete charge of

“There is nothing wrong with IA”



The new MD, R. Prasad, seems optimistic about the airline.



■ (From left)
Inefficient service;
militant unions;
and lack of
adequate aircraft
are some of the
problems that
plague Indian
Airlines

the airline. This state of affairs continued even after Vora relinquished his post, and Shivraj Patil took charge of the ministry. By this time, Prasad had found a powerful friend in Capt. Satish Sharma, ex-IA pilot and the PM's close friend.

1988 was a disastrous year for IA. The crash of the Boeing in Ahmedabad was just one of the many mishaps. Some

of the others were: aircraft landing without lowering their wheels, a stationary Airbus' nose-wheel collapsing, Buta Singh's flight being delayed, and even Patil being forced to change aircraft because of technical snags. To add to the general state of disrepair, IA's engineers went on the warpath demanding higher wages. Patil started baying for Pais' blood; he also asked Prasad to

Inefficient management is Indian Airlines' principal problem. The ailing airline has now pinned all hopes on its new managing director, R. Prasad. Excerpts from an interview:

On Indian Airlines: There is nothing wrong with IA. As an organisation, it's good. The only thing is that a little complacency has crept in.

On change: You have to make people understand what's best for the organisation and then be firm about implementing the idea. In Indian Airlines, there is an inbuilt resistance to ideas. That has to change.

On IA's unions: I told them you have got to work and they said yes. They said they will cooperate. All wage agreements have been signed. I have no words to mince with unions.

On the discourteous attitude of staffers: I'm putting a person who will be tailoring a programme to talk to people about why they should be courteous. Physical facilities are different—if we don't have it, we don't have it. But yes, we can certainly do something about behaviour. It has to be one-to-one.

On delays: Additional capacity (with the induction of A-320 aircraft)

should help ease the problem.

On whether the induction of A-320s will lead to oversupply:

You can't increase the number of passengers unless you provide capacity. The A-320s will be flying an average of five sectors every day and the capacity (of each) is 168. That's 840 people per aircraft per day. That's not enough, as we will be pulling out the leased aircraft and also plan to remove four older Boeing 737s from normal service. There is a lot of unmet demand. Earlier, people used to come to me and say put us on 182 or 405 (daily flights from Delhi to Bombay) for the same day. Now they say, "Today would be nice. But if you can get me on a flight tomorrow, it will be all right." This shows demand.

On declining profits: Profits will go on declining. You have to pay interest on aircraft purchases, pay depreciation. Adding new machinery costs a lot of money. We have to pay \$760 million for the 19 A-320s. Ten per cent of the amount will go every year as interest. Plus depreciation of Rs 60 crores. Funds will increase, because depreciation stays with the company. Cash will increase, but not profitability.

settle the wage issue. But Prasad stalled, saying that the airline didn't have enough money and that profitability was decreasing. (However, Prasad signed all wage agreements last month, almost immediately after becoming MD.)

Despite setbacks—and his unimpressive tenure—Pais lobbied hard for an extension after his term ended at the end of March. The IAS lobby pitched for one of its own candidates. By all accounts, Prasad wasn't really in the running. But Satish Sharma's patronage proved to be pivotal. Patil also backed Prasad and asked S.K. Mishra, the present civil aviation secretary, and IA chairman Rahul Bajaj to support his candidature. Prasad assumed office on 1 April this year.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

March 1988 □ 20,758

March 1989 □ 21,000

March 1990 □ 23,000
(Estimate)

As a result of all this power play, it is the airline that suffers most. Chaddha's decisions were countered by Tytler. Pais was afraid of Prasad—he clung on to power and never took bold decisions that would benefit the airline. Not many in aviation circles believe Prasad can do much to turn IA around and infuse it with a sense of dynamism and professionalism. He is considered to be an extremely competent finance man, but not much else. Yet, he has the best chance of improving the state of affairs at IA, say civil aviation observers. This—more than anything else—underscores IA's long-term management malaise.

IA has computerised reservations systems and, last week, computerised check-in was introduced at New Delhi airport. But these are possibly the only good things that have happened to IA in the past ten years. With senior management personnel not knowing what will happen to them the next day—and each more interested in protecting and promoting himself than running the airline—the middle and junior level-managers have "simply stopped innovating or caring", feel IA insiders. The airline is virtually running itself—almost despite itself. IA might trundle along, but unless management is tightened up, matters will not improve.

Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi

OIL EXPLORATION

At the mercy of ONGC

Oil rig companies get together to demand a better deal from the public sector giant

If units in an emerging industry come together to form an association, can this be called ganging up? The question apart, that is exactly what a group of little known companies—the Indian owners of oil rigs—is doing. They are forming an association to protect themselves from the tactics of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC). While there are as few oil rig owners in India as you have fingers on one hand, they are scared stiff to talk about their business with ONGC.

And not without reason. ONGC is their sole employer. If thrown out or their money is blocked, all they can do is to hit the bottom. By forming an association they hope that their combined voice would be more effective in dealing with the public sector behemoth than the piping voices of individual operators.

Essar Shipping, Aban-Lloyd, Great Atwood, Hi-Tech Drilling and BOSS (Bombay Offshore Supplies and Services) are the only Indian companies which own offshore oil rigs and are all working for ONGC. Offshore drilling is an immensely capital-intensive business and the rigs cost a hefty sum. There are different types of rigs depending on the sea depth they operate in. There are jack-ups for shallower waters, while 300-foot cantilever and semi-submersible mat-type rigs work at depths beyond 300 feet. And the costs could vary from \$15 million to \$26 million.

The Indian companies have invested substantially in purchasing offshore rigs but the daily rates offered by ONGC hardly cover the financial costs after meeting the operating expenses. It is only after about four years of continuous

operation that the companies can hope to be in the dividend list.

Apart from the owners of rigs, there are a handful of rig operators who have taken jack-ups on lease. Notable among these are Jagson, Jindal and Amarship.

The Indian companies have invested a whopping Rs 300 crores for the purchase of offshore rigs but the daily rates offered by ONGC hardly cover the operating expenses

A semi-submersible mobile offshore rig

Obviously, those who have leased rigs are in a better position since they do not have to spend large sums in acquiring them. Some of these companies have taken rigs on wet lease from overseas operators and are able to quote much lower rates. Even the crew operating these rigs are foreigners employed by the overseas rig-owning companies.

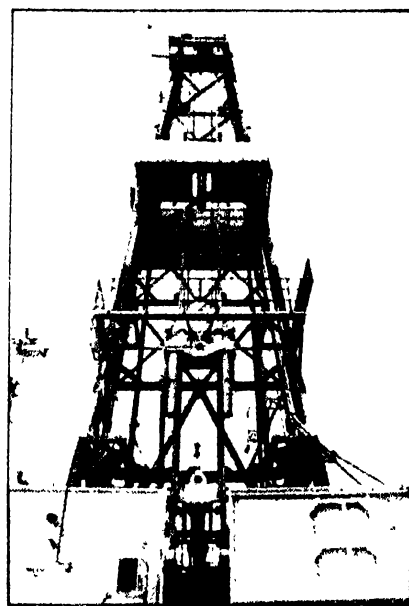
What has made matters even more difficult, the rig owners allege, is that some of these operators of leased jack-ups have been getting favoured treatment from ONGC's steering committee. This is especially true of Jagson International, which reportedly has connections with Union minister Jagdish Tytler. Jagson, which is said to be a front for foreign rig companies, participates in virtually all tenders put out by ONGC—without submitting technical details. Their tender bid is normally in the form of a three-four page letter which makes it a point to say: "We agree to all the terms and conditions of ONGC and will identify the rigs when the tender opens."

In a recent tender, ONGC's chemical committee turned down Jagson's bid on the grounds that it was unable to process it without technical details, and also because the firm had not identified the rig which is an essential norm for tendering. Strangely, the ONGC's commercial department included Jagson in the shortlist of eligible firms in November 1988. Other firms which had not met the tendering norms were rejected. On 21 January, 1989, when the price bids were opened, Jagson said that they would identify the rig within 30 days and give the technical details. It offered '5-Star', a Singaporean rig. Since Abban-Lloyd had offered the same rig in its bid on 18 January, Jagson's offer ought to have been rejected. But the steering committee gave Jagson 30 days to identify another rig. Jagson identified 'Viking Driller', a rig owned by the Norwegian company, Viking Offshore. Since there was no memorandum of understanding (MOU) or lease agreement with the Norwegian firm, Jagson asked for another 30 days' extension. This time it identified 'Danwood Ice', owned by a Danish firm, J. Lauritzen. Again, for lack of an MOU, Jagson has asked for a month's extension till 26 June.

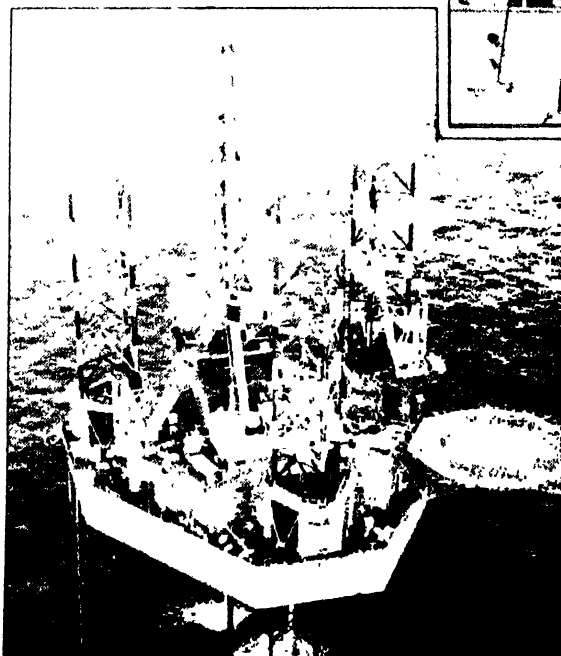
Meanwhile, Essar Shipping which had a drillship of its own, did not get the contract on the grounds that its quotation was high. At the same time, BOSS, which had quoted the second lowest price after Jagson, informed ONGC that it had got government sanction to purchase

a drillship in March this year, and that it would be arriving in Indian waters by June (the drilling season begins in September). Not only that, BOSS's drillship is the first of its kind, in that it is dynamically positioned and can drill to a depth of 3,000 feet. While Essar and BOSS have been overlooked despite owning rigs, the tender period has been extended twice to accommodate Jagson which is yet to tie up a rig on lease.

In another instance, ONGC opened a technical bid on 21 February this year for a semi-submersible rig. Once again the Indian rig owners lost out after Jagson gave a letter saying that they could provide a rig and would accept ONGC's terms. BOSS is the only Indian



The derrick and drillfloor of a semi-submersible rig



A jack-up rig: expensive

company which owns a semi-submersible rig and industry sources strongly feel that it should have got the contract. But ONGC, according to these sources, insisted that since BOSS had purchased the rig from a foreign com-

pany with which it was working earlier, it should accept the 1985 dollar rate of Rs 12.50 (when the earlier joint tender with the foreign company was made). As a result, BOSS has been offered a daily rate of \$16,400, which would amount to a loss of Rs 14,000 per day as the dollar rate has gone up steeply since 1985. But, at the same time, Jagson has been offered a daily rate of \$24,000, that too, for "work over operation" and not exploratory drilling.

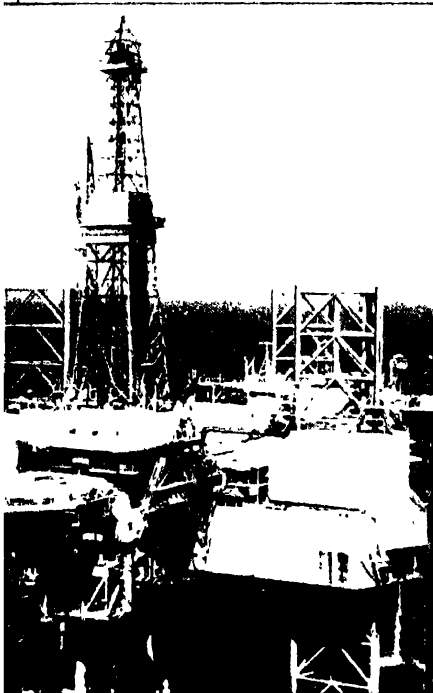
Says a spokesman of an Indian rig company, "If this is the sort of thing that ONGC accepts, then what is the idea of asking for technical bids?" The *modus operandi* of Jagson, he points out, is unique: Jagson quotes for all ONGC tenders; confirms in a letter that it would conform to all terms and conditions; obtains technical approval; and, during the price bid opening, quotes the lowest price as it is only a front for a foreign firm. He further discloses that Jagson leaves the entire operations to the foreign company. While this involves no financial involvement for Jagson, the company reportedly makes a minimum of \$1,000 per day as the differential between the ONGC contract rate and the rate that Jagson has worked out with its foreign partner.

And Jagson, which is at present operating three rigs for ONGC, is ex-

**ONGC is the sole
employer of the rig
owners. If thrown out
or their money is
blocked, all they can
do is to sink. But
ONGC has not given
them the necessary**

backing

pected to bring in two more rigs on lease. One of them, the 'Apollo 1', was not acceptable to the technical committee of ONGC because of its low variable load factor—it could take a load of only 1,500 tonnes against ONGC's specification of 2,000 tonnes. However, the steering committee is learnt to have overruled the objections of the technical committee and favoured Jagson. The 'Norbe II', which Jagson leased in November 1987, is capable of drilling to a depth of only 220 feet against ONGC's requirement of 300 feet. Inexplicably, instead of rejecting the bid, the steering panel has offered a shallow-water location to Jagson to operate the rig.



ONGC's Sagar Shakti oil rig: thrown open to Indian firms

When the rigs business was thrown open to Indian firms, it was believed that the Indian companies would acquire expertise in the long-run and ultimately be in a position to challenge the foreign rig operators who had a stranglehold on ONGC's operations. In fact, the commission always faced the threat that in case the international daily rates were increased substantially, it would find it difficult to hire the required number of rigs without shelling out higher amounts. But strangely, ONGC, in its own wisdom, never extended the much-needed support to the domestic rig owners.

The daily rates for drilling rigs were at depressed levels in the last two years because of lack of activity. Fortunately, there has been a turnaround in the last one year or so in major oil-related areas. The rates have now gone up on the

What has made matters worse for rig owners is that some operators of leased jack-ups have been getting favoured treatment from ONGC

international market, along with the price of rigs and components. Indian rig owners who had purchased rigs at higher prices are, however, getting the lower daily rates being offered by the commission now. The commission had increased its daily rates somewhat to about \$23,000 from around \$17,000 earlier. In contrast, the rates have increased from \$17,000 per day to as much as \$30,000 now in Indonesia, Australia and Malaysia. Further off, in

the North Sea oilfields, the rates have touched \$32,000 from \$16,000 over the last eight months alone. As a result, the rig-owning companies which are not making profits, are wondering why they had at all entered the drilling business.

To add to their woes, the sharp devaluation in the rupee (16 per cent) vis-a-vis other currencies has eaten into the incomes of the rig-owning companies. The foreign exchange forward cover, on the other hand, has been made prohibitive by placing the cover premium at 22 per cent.

In desperation, the rig owners have now decided to form the Indian Rig Owners Association to protect their interests. Having invested a whopping Rs 300 crores in a high-tech, risky field, the rig owners feel that for their survival, ONGC has to offer a fairer deal to them besides extending them financial terms which would enable them to earn a surplus over costs. And keep from submerging.

Anjan Roy/New Delhi and Olga Tellis/Bombay

INDIA CEMENTS

A spanner in the works

Financial institutions back out of the deal to hand back the company to the original promoters

A week, it is said, is a long time in politics. However, when politics and business mix, even a few hours can be a much longer time. Or so is the experience of N. Srinivasan and N. Sankar, two industrialists who have found that one political 'hand' could undo a deal that was almost clinched. Srinivasan and Sankar had practically regained control of India Cements Limited, one of south India's largest cement companies, from which the former had been ousted nearly a decade ago.

The deal to bring back Srinivasan—whose grandfather and father had founded India Cements more than 40 years ago—and Sankar, who is related to Srinivasan, had been painstakingly worked out over a period of almost 12 months. By February this year, it had been decided that P.V. Rajaraman, an IAS officer from the Tamil Nadu cadre and the current managing director, would step down to make way for Sankar and Srinivasan. While the two industrialists had picked up a 12 per cent

holding in the company, they had given a commitment to raise their stake to a maximum of 30 per cent. Thus, when an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) was called on 22 April it appeared to be



all over bar the formality of the financial institutions (FIs) voting their 52 per cent stake in favour of Sankar as non-executive chairman and Srinivasan as managing director.

But the proceedings on 22 April came like a bolt from the blue. Nobody had reckoned with one politician who wanted to hit back at DMK president and chief minister M. Karunanidhi and literally took a 'hand' in the matter. When the resolutions came up for voting, the nominees of the FIs announced that they had received no instructions to vote either way. They even demanded postponement of the EGM to a date not later than September this year. There was shock and disbelief at the sudden announcement but the FIs were in no mood to offer explanations.

The reason for the FIs' sudden *volte face* emerged quickly. It was learnt that V. Ramamurthy, who had replaced G.K. Moopanar as the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president after the election debacle, wanted to embarrass Karunanidhi. He managed to do it in a way which some people described as "acting out of pique", and others more strongly as hitting below the belt.

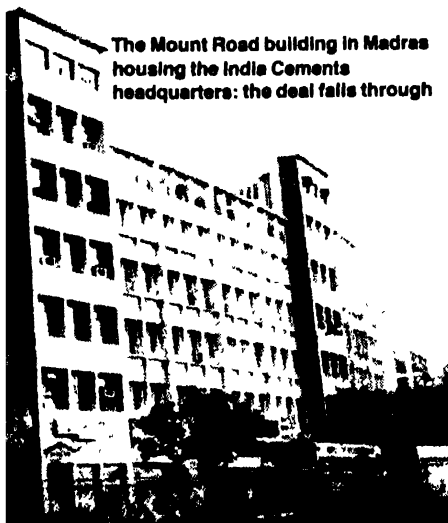
It is well known in Madras that Srinivasan is a close friend of Maran, a long-standing member of the Rajya Sabha and editor of *Murasoli*, a Tamil daily and DMK mouthpiece. Maran is the nephew and son-in-law of chief

minister Karunanidhi. The deal to hand over India Cements to the original promoters was decided upon in principle long before the Assembly elections in

N. Sankar: baulked



The Mount Road building in Madras housing the India Cements headquarters: the deal falls through



The reason for the FIs' volte face emerged quickly. TNCC(I) president Ramamurthy wanted to embarrass Karunanidhi. He managed to do it in a way which some people described as "acting out of pique"

Tamil Nadu in January last, when Karunanidhi was still in the political wilderness. It is thus quite clear that when the FIs decided to support Srinivasan and Sankar, there was no political pressure on them.

However, new TNCC(I) president Ramamurthy had apparently decided to give as many pinpricks to the DMK government as possible, notwithstanding the fact that they may be insignificant in the political sense. Ramamurthy is understood to have complained to the Congress(I) high command in Delhi and in particular to Prime Minister Rajiv-

Gandhi that allowing Srinivasan and Sankar into India Cements would be a victory of sorts for Karunanidhi in view of the close friendship between Srinivasan and Maran. Rajiv Gandhi and his advisers in Delhi reportedly fell for this line in spite of the fact that Srinivasan's re-entry into India Cements would not have made any difference to the political fortunes of the Congress(I) in Tamil Nadu. Whatever be it, this led to last-minute instructions from Delhi asking the FIs to back off from the deal.

The last word, however, has not been said, for Maran is standing by his old friend. Karunanidhi is understood to have taken a personal interest in the matter. According to well informed sources, the chief minister has got in touch with Rajiv Gandhi and assured him that there is nothing political about handing over India Cements to the original promoters. He has requested the Prime Minister to delink political and business angles in this matter and allow the FIs to go through with their original decision. Rajiv Gandhi, it is learnt, has now agreed to review the issue.

Meanwhile, Srinivasan and Sankar are keeping silent. They are making no statements in public or to the press. With Rajiv Gandhi reportedly having agreed to review the issue, they are hoping that, come September, political pettiness will not prevail.

R. Vijayaraghavan/Madras

EXPORTS

The kitty keeps growing

Helped by the falling rupee, the export figure doubles in three years

Guess what happens when a foreigner wants to import goods from India? He rushes to the nearest Indian mission and speaks to the Indian trade representative who tells him to come back ten days later, by when, hopefully, his telex message to New Delhi will elicit a reasonable reply. The trade official himself cannot help, sorry, so take it or leave it. In most cases the potential importer leaves it—because the Japanese or South Korean missions are easily more forthcoming.

Yet, amazingly enough, despite the complete absence of a trade information network, Indian exports continue to rise. From Rs 10,895 crores in 1985-86, they jumped to Rs 20,281 crores in 1988-89. Consequently, the trade gap

narrowed from Rs 8,763 crores in 1985-86 to Rs 6,624 crores in 1987-88 and rose marginally to Rs 7,412 in 1988-89. "This is a landmark," raves a commerce ministry spokesperson, adding, "exports have almost doubled since 1985-86." And the fact that the trade deficit did not widen despite the increase in foodgrain imports after the 1987 drought is due almost entirely to this achievement.

Some of this apparent increase, however, is illusory. In 1986, the rupee-dollar rate was Rs 12.36. Today it stands at Rs 16. Obviously the rise in the export value has much to do with the fall in the price of the rupee. But there has, nevertheless, been a substantial increase.

How did this happen? "True, the devaluation of the rupee has helped," the spokesperson explains. "But it is equally correct to say that the increase was also due to the series of policy initiatives taken by the government over the last three years, mainly incentives and liberalisation." The government has made access to inputs required for export production easier, granted 100 per cent exemption of export profits from income-tax and launched various other schemes which are rapidly making exports a profitable venture.

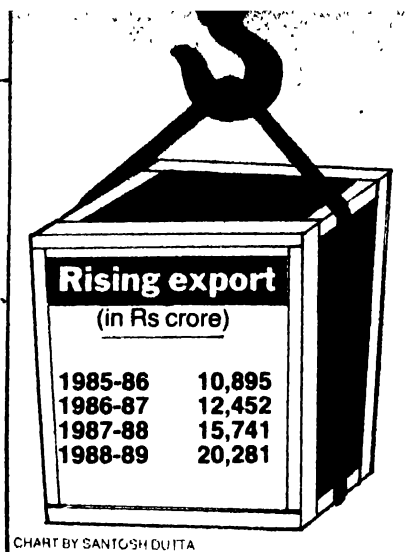
Other steps paid off, too. Accelerated technological upgradation and mod-



Dinesh Singh: helped by the falling rupee

ernisation of industry, freer access to raw materials, intermediaries and consumables, an export thrust strategy which identified 14 select product groups, the creation of a policy environment conducive to export growth, and the revival of the Board of Trade with big names in business and industry—Aditya Birla, R.P. Goenka, Viren Shah, Raunaq Singh, H.S. Singhania, J.N. Saprú and M.V. Arunachalam. "Of the 14 thrust sectors in exports," the spokesperson says, "most have shown remarkable buoyancy in recent years." Notable among these is electronics which clocked exports of Rs 2,200 crores in 1988-89, after stagnating at Rs 1,000 crores for the last nine years.

The government has reason to be proud. The export target for 1988-89, set at Rs 18,795 crores, has been exceeded by Rs 1,486 crores. The rate of growth of exports over the last two years has not only been sustained but



improved upon. Between December 1988 and March 1989, the rate of growth of exports has been 40 per cent above the rate for the corresponding period of the previous year. It was largely exports to the US, Japan, the USSR, Belgium, West Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, France, Singapore and Australia that accounted for the burgeoning exports in 1988.

Fortunately, the rise in exports offset the growth in imports. In 1988-89, imports were up by an alarming Rs 1,929 crores (25.4 per cent) over the previous year. Of this, foodgrains went up by Rs 561 crores, fertilisers by Rs 436 crores, petroleum and petroleum products by Rs 155 crores, metaliferous ores and metal scrap by Rs 257 crores, iron and steel by Rs 667 crores and precious and semi-precious stones (which form a tenth of our total imports) rose by Rs 843 crores. Of course, imports of foodgrains and fertilisers were necessitated by the 1987 drought.

If there is any reason why exports have continued to rise, it is the enormous potential of Indian goods in the international market. Government

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claims apart, exports have risen in spite of, and not because of, government policy. While the country has some 20 export promotion councils, only three of these—the Tea Board, the Engineering Export Promotion Council and the Handicrafts Exports Council—have offices abroad. For other sectors, buyers of Indian goods have to rely on scant information available with the commercial officers at Indian missions, which, as the Estimates Committee of Parliament has repeatedly pointed out, are grossly inefficient.

Says Union commerce minister Dinesh Singh, "Although the export growth in recent years has been appreciable, it is still not sufficient. We have to strive for a quantum jump. One basic thing is that you cannot export unless you produce. The aim should be not just to export surpluses but to gear up production in a manner which would meet international demands." The minister believes that since the government has agreed to provide manufacturers with inputs at international prices, they ought to return the gesture by "thinking of output at international prices and quality, too."

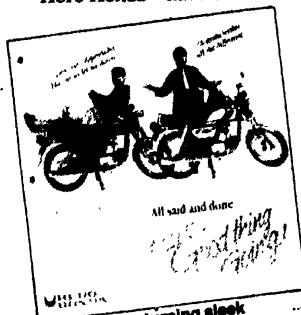
The main issue at stake, in Singh's view, is how to sustain the current level of export growth. One of the ways he plans to do it is by maintaining better interaction between trade and industry. The revival of the Board of Trade—which existed when he was commerce minister under Indira Gandhi between 1968 and 1970—was a major step. Says a commerce ministry official: "One of its first uses is to tackle problems that industrialists face with the bureaucracy, the major complaints being delays in clearing licences and excessive red tape." After its revival, the board held its first meeting on 29 May. Besides government officials, the board includes representatives of industrialists' bodies like the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the Associated Chambers of Commerce (Assocham) and the Confederation of Engineering Industry (CEI).

Nevertheless, the need of the hour is to evolve a system of providing information about Indian goods to businessmen abroad. Commerce ministry officials say the Prime Minister is himself keen on setting up an umbrella export promotion agency with offices abroad—on the lines of the South Korean and Japanese export promotion bodies—to find market outlets for Indian goods. And as a commerce ministry official says: "This in itself would lead to a quantum jump in exports."

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

New round in the bike war

Bajaj, Escorts and Hero Honda have been slugging it out for months for control of the 100 cc motorcycle market, with no indication of winners or losers. The products—Kawasaki Bajaj, Escorts Yamaha and Hero Honda—have carved



Hero Honda: turning sleek

out their niches. But come July, and the bike wars will take a new turn. Hero Honda is launching a new 100 cc motorcycle called 'Sleek', and a publicity campaign is currently being planned. Sleek has the same engine as the Hero Honda bikes on the road, but new features include raised mudguards, a longer fuel tank and a snazzy meter board between the handles. The market appears all set for another all-out slug-fest.

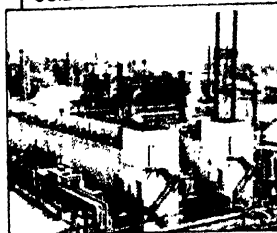
Moratorium on Calcutta bank

The country's largest private sector bank, Calcutta-headquartered United Industrial Bank (UIB), with deposits of Rs 300 crores, is in trouble. The Reserve Bank of India last week declared a moratorium on payments by UIB till 10 October. RBI has already drawn up plans for the amalgamation of United Industrial Bank with a nationalised bank but is tightlipped about its identity. RBI has taken this belated step, according to banking industry circles in Calcutta, because UIB was stuck with too many sticky accounts. Mismanagement apart, UIB had a high proportion of disputed accounts. The bank's advance portfolio is reported to be poorly supervised. While industries and depositors have turned somewhat panicky over this development, business circles are busy speculating the identity of the bank that will get UIB.

UCIL plans for diversification

It is the kind of nightmare any corporate body would take long to live down. And Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL)—which paid up a huge compensation a few

UCIL's Chembur plant



months back—is waiting anxiously for the day when it would be able to free itself of the stigma of the Bhopal gas tragedy. For, till then the government is unlikely to consider any of its projects. However, the multinational chemical giant is not sitting idle. In September last year the company changed its articles of association to enable it to branch out to new areas. And software is what they are looking at as a major growth area. UCIL has done its homework and is only waiting for a clean slate to start afresh. Meanwhile, as part of the trimming process, UCIL has sold its chemical and plastics plant at Chembur in Bombay to Abhay Oswal of Oswal Agro.

Proto return?

P and O Shipping Lines of the UK, one of the oldest in the world and at one time the only means of communication between Great Britain and its biggest colony, is learnt to have decided to return to India. In 1983, P and O sold the last of its 40 per cent shareholding in its Indian company, Mackinnon Mackenzie and only maintained a representative office in Bombay. They are reportedly in the process of severing their connection with their agents, Tata Tea, and are looking for an Indian partner to set up a new company in India. Said a P and O spokesman who is in India, "It's too early to say what form the new company will take." However, Tata Tea seems to be in the dark about P and O's plans.



After the surrender

What became of the Chambal dacoits who gave up a life of crime?

The chit of a girl who turned mass killer at 24, commandeered a gang at 25, and opted out of crime at 26, Phoolan Devi now lives in despair. Having inspired three Hindi films and a book by two Australian authors, the *Dasyu Rani* (Dacoit Queen) languishes in Gwalior Central Jail, waiting for her cases to come up for hearing, after being transferred from one state to another. But with Arjun Singh, the chief minister who made her surrender possible, ousted, the promises made to her when she turned in may well remain unfulfilled. So Phoolan lives on, sick, cheated and abandoned, and sorry that she ever gave up her olive green uniform and the gun, in exchange for what turned out to be a false hope.

Sometime ago, Phoolan had been given a plot of land measuring ten *bighas* in the outskirts of Gwalior, so that she could set up her own farm. The man responsible for this grant was Rajan Chaturvedi, the former superintendent of police (SP), Bhind, who organised her surrender along with that of Ghanshyam and his gang in late 1982. But Devi's brother sold it off for about Rs 2 lakhs, pocketed the money and absconded, leaving his sister high and dry. Now the government plans to allot her another ten *bighas*—in her own name—so that she can live with some financial security in the safety of Gwalior district.

After Arjun Singh stepped down as CM, following the adverse High Court judgement in the Churahat lottery case, Phoolan Devi told a visiting filmmaker from Delhi that, she and another former dacoit, Ramesh Sikarwar, went on fast in protest. She wouldn't touch food, and all she insisted on doing was her *puja*. "The only person whose word we value is Arjun Singh," Devi told the filmmaker. "If it wasn't for him, we wouldn't be here." She added: "I didn't know Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have so many problems between them. If I knew my cases wouldn't be transferred and I'd have to rot without trial for so long, I wouldn't have surrendered at all."

Poolan Devi has a total of 48 cases registered against her for crimes she committed in Kanpur, Jhansi, Etawah, Jalaun and Hamirpur. The most serious of these is the murder of

20 *thakurs* in Behmai on 14 January, 1981. Behmai apart, she has two other murder charges against her, the rest being cases of kidnapping for ransom. Malkhan Singh, the other major dacoit in Gwalior Central, has 27 cases registered against him in Uttar Pradesh, three of them for murder and the rest for kidnapping. Both Phoolan Devi and Malkhan Singh are waiting for their cases to be transferred from UP to Madhya Pradesh.

Apart from trying to settle differences with UP on the issue of transfer of the cases, the Madhya Pradesh administration is also kept busy by attempts to rehabilitate the dacoits. The progress has been slow but sure. Ramesh Sikarwar and his gang of seven—who turned in long after Phoolan Devi, Ghanshyam and Malkhan Singh and their men—were the first to be rehabilitated under the supervision of the collector of Morena, Arvind Joshi, in 1985.

"The only other collector who is serious about rehabilitating dacoits is Sumit Bose of Gwalior," says a social worker. Bose plans to give Phoolan Devi about ten *bighas* only because "land is now a scarce commodity in Gwalior." The total number of dacoits to be accommodated in Bhind, Morena, Gwalior, Datiya and Shivpuri is 40.

The principle of winning over the dacoit with friendly gestures and assurances has been in vogue for 70 years. Princes, politicians, social workers, policemen and journalists have all tried to draw him out of the ravines. The underlying philosophy is that society has wronged the outlaw and owes him a happier life. It were the Scindias of Gwalior who first thought of inducing dacoits to give up the gun. But what might have been possible in the reign of the Scindias or Indira Gandhi seems impossible today. One: because both politics and decision-making have become very personalised. For instance, a senior police official cannot take decisions on his own; neither can a collector or a chief minister. As a social worker points out: "They all have to seek permission from somebody above."

Lawlessness in the Chambal is probably as old as the ravines. The British met it with a combination of guile

and brute force. It took William Sleeman some 15 years to exhaust the *thugs* in the mid-19th century, have them rounded up and hanged. But assorted gangs started operating in the ravines from 1860 onward. Those were the days of dacoit Sultana. After 1857, the Scindias emerged as the rulers of central India, with their headquarters in Gwalior. They were the first rulers to bear the brunt of the dacoit menace. Jiyajirao Scindia's cannon-and-fire operation in the jungles of Shivpuri resulted in the first recorded surrender of about two dozen dacoits, in Kerala, in 1919.

The submission of the bandits in Independent India was an acrimonious event. The survivors of Man Singh's gang laid down their arms before Acharya Vinoba Bhave in 1960. Madhya Pradesh's inspector general of police K.F. Rustumji, opposed the idea of treating the criminals with kid-gloves and saw Bhave as a "wishy-washy philosopher", though he made sure he



To avoid legal complications Jayaprakash Narayan got all the dacoits to confess to one crime. This expedient helped the prosecution

didn't miss the surrender ceremony, himself. The years 1960-70 saw the biggest-ever dacoit revival, with around 600 of them infesting the ravines. The most feared were Mohar Singh (the dacoit with the highest-ever price of Rs 2.5 lakh on his head) Madho Singh and Nathu Singh, who moved around with little armies.

Thanks to the efforts of Jayaprakash Narayan, the then Madhya Pradesh CM, P.C. Sethi and Indira Gandhi herself, 572 of them surrendered in 1972. JP and his secretariat camped near the ravines for about seven months. Sarvodaya workers from all over the country converged on Madhya Pradesh. The operation was meticulously planned and executed. JP set the norms for all future surrenders, setting up a precedent for dacoit reform. These were:

- No capital punishment
- No handcuffs and confinement in an open jail
- Twenty *bighas* of land for each person
- Proper rations in prison.
- Irrespective of the nature of the crime, a maximum term of six to eight years for each person.

To avoid legal complications and parallel sentences, JP got all the dacoits to confess to one crime. The expedient

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helped the prosecution. Eventually, the last of those who surrendered in 1972 were released in 1980. Mohar Singh and Madho Singh now work for the Congress(I). None of them has ever thought of returning to a life of crime. JP's methods were tried and tested. And they turned out to be the best.



When Madhya Pradesh faced yet another series of attacks from the dacoits between the mid-Seventies and the early Eighties, the administration wasn't sure how to handle it. But the initiative of Arjun Singh, a group of journalists, and some police officers enabled the government to cope with the situation. Chhabiram shot to notoriety in 1974, Malkhan Singh in 1976, Phoolan Devi in 1978 and Pan Singh Tomar, a former national award-winning athlete, in 1979. In 1981, some 55 gangs roamed the ravines. But between 1981 and 1983, about 120 dacoits turned in, Malkhan Singh and his gang of 19 on 17 June, 1982, and the gangs of Phoolan Devi, Ghanshyam and Karan Singh on 13 February, 1983.

But far from being content at the deal they got, all the dacoits do now is complain. Ever since Ghanshyam escaped from his police escort to reconstitute his gang and was subsequently shot, none of the inmates of Gwalior Central Jail have been allowed to go out on parole. Uttar Pradesh continues to dawdle over the transfer of the dacoits' cases to Madhya Pradesh. And only a few of the ex-dacoits have got 20 *bighas* of land as promised.

In a confidential note submitted to the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh on 8 April, 1988, a senior police official complained that progress in the cases of the ex-dacoits "has been extremely slow because of a lack of interest". He wrote: "The special judge at Gwalior conducts trials 3-4 times a month, which is completely inadequate. The prosecution has led to no convictions except under the Arms Act for their surrendered weapons. That is, Malkhan Singh has been convicted in only one case for four years and has spent over five and a half years in jail."

As for the transfer of cases registered in UP and Rajasthan to MP, he wrote, it will "require Supreme Court orders under Section 406 of the Criminal Procedure Code". But this is a matter which has to be decided by the state governments themselves.

The Madhya Pradesh government has even tried to get its way by petitioning the PM's office in this connection but that hasn't worked either. Says journalist Kalyan Mukherjee, who helped Malkhan and his gang out of the ravines, "I had an interview with R. Vasudevan who handles these matters at the PMO. All he did was serve me coffee and say 'We must look into it'. Nothing was done. I say the Rajiv Gandhi government has destroyed the tradition of the surrender of dacoits that JP set up."

Nirmal Mitra/Gwalior



(Clockwise from above) Phoolan Devi surrendering; Ghanshyam: shot by the police; Malkhan Singh: 27 cases registered against him

Under fire

*Terrorists' guns have not been able to silence the
Hind Samachar Group of newspapers
in Punjab*

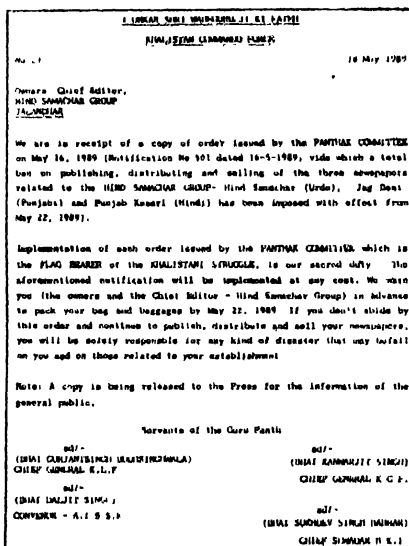
● News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress...rest all is advertising.

Going by this quintessential definition of news, Punjab would surely rate as one of the most newsy spots anywhere in the world. Just about every printed news item here—save the routine public relations hand-outs—evokes formidable reactions from the two centres of power that matter: the terrorists and the cops.

If the police harassment of newsmen, and their occasional arrests, are nothing new, the terrorist attacks on scribes and their family members are also no longer shocking. Reporters in Punjab have learnt to consider these as professional hazards.



(Below) Lala Jagat Narain and (Inset) his son Ramesh Chandra: victims of terrorism



Photocopy of the threat letter issued by the KCF to the owners of the Hind Samachar Group: stern warning

But the delicate balance between the devil and the deep sea was upset this month when the terrorists declared a war of attrition against the state's most powerful—and country's third largest—

newspaper establishment, the Hind Samachar Group. The combined daily circulation of the group's three dailies—*Punjab Kesari* (Hindi), *Jagbani* (Punjabi) and *Hind Samachar* (Urdu)—is about seven lakh copies.

It all began around mid-May when the parallel Panthic Committee, a break-away group of terrorist Gurbachan Manchahal's outlawed outfit, held an underground press conference in Amritsar. Signed by three of its five members, the committee declared a "ban" on the three papers of the group. "These papers are engaged in slighting the great struggle of the Khalsa Panth for quite some time," their statement read.

The staff members, distributors, agents and hawkers of the group were given a week's time to wind up business. Similar warnings were issued by other underground organisations like the Khalistan Commando Force (KCF) and the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF). The KCF's note was more specific: "If you don't abide by this order and continue to publish, distribute and sell your newspapers, you will be solely responsible for any kind of disaster..."

That the terrorists meant business this time became clear as soon as the deadline set by the extremists expired. Terrorists struck in broad daylight at Mohali town near Chandigarh on the very next day and gunned down a news agent, Subhash Singla, and a distributor, Thakur Joginder Pal Singh.

Their next target was a 20-year-old hawker named Rajinder Kumar. Two teenaged boys shot at him from point-blank range, hardly 50 metres from the

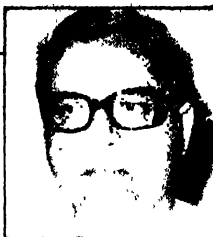


senior police officers' flats in Amritsar where at least 50 heavily armed guards are posted on duty round the clock.

The administration reacted swiftly. Armed guards were provided with every vehicle carrying the newspaper, security was stepped up in and around the newspapers' head office in Jalandhar and also its various other sub-offices. In Amritsar and Gurdaspur, special early morning patrolling was started to infuse a sense of security among the hawkers. The police, however, could not deter the terrorists from striking again. Last week they gunned down another hawker, Ashwani Kumar, at Amritsar's posh Canady Avenue, hardly half a kilometre from the spot of Rajinder's killing.

The hawkers and distributors in Amritsar have been observing a total strike ever since. They have refused to sell other papers, including the ones based in Chandigarh and Delhi. Even the *Hind Samachar* management could not bring them back to work despite an insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh for distributors and Rs 50,000 for hawkers. The paper has also insured its staff members. But so great is the scare of the terrorists' threat that even in the relatively secure cities like Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Chandigarh, the circulation of the paper is dwindling.

Vijay Kumar, chief editor of the *Hind Samachar* Group, said that the circulation of the group's newspapers had fallen by 90,000 copies in the first two weeks of June alone. He told SUNDAY at his heavily-fortified office in Jalandhar that a large number of readers have been



Most disturbing is the observation of editor Vijay Kumar that the terrorists' real target is the several lakh-strong Sikh readership of the three papers, especially the Punjabi daily, Jagabani

coming to collect copies of the papers in the absence of hawkers. Dozens of newspaper hawkers and agents, however, contradicted the figure given by the editor. The daily circulation had fallen by at least two lakh copies, one of them said. Agents too confirmed that the advertisement revenue has drastically declined in a matter of days.

However, it would be unfair to estimate the losses of the group merely in terms of circulation or in the fall of revenue. The paper has lost two of its chief editors in the last five years. Lala Jagat Narain, the founder editor of the group, a freedom fighter and a veteran journalist had been shot dead by the supporters of Bhindranwale in 1981. His elder son and a former legislator, Ramesh Chandra, was gunned down

three years later. Two prominent staff members, Bant Singh, the news editor of *Jagabani*, and Inderjit Sood, the news editor of *Hind Samachar*, were shot dead by terrorists.

But all three papers of the *Hind Samachar* Group have been consistent in their unequivocal opposition to separatism. It surely goes to the credit of its present editor that he refused to change the editorial policy of the paper despite the killings of the earlier two editors (his father and elder brother). The paper also has the distinction of raising from its readers a relief fund of a whopping Rs 1.59 crores to help the victims of terrorist violence—both Hindus and Sikhs. About a thousand families of both the communities have so far received aid from the readers of the group.

Detractors of the group say that the *Hind Samachar* papers have a Hindu bias in their news coverage. It is also true that all the three papers have a penchant for publishing sensational news, which is often provocative. A careful scrutiny of the papers shows that the provocative aspect is confined strictly to the papers' news columns. And this is a policy the paper shares with most of its rivals, like *Pratap*, *Ajit*, *Milap* and *Akali Patrika* to name a few. Even the worst critics of the paper agree that the editorials of the three papers are balanced and sober.

Surprisingly, the press in Punjab is, by and large, silent about the terrorist attacks on the paper. Laments editor Vijay Kumar, "Even *Indian Express* is silent, perhaps because its Hindi paper, *Jansatta*, is gaining circulation at our cost." Suhel Singh, editor of the Jalandhar-based *Lokahar* has warned that the press in Punjab has to unite against the terrorists. Or else, he said, they would dictate terms to the press in general. Akali stalwart Jeevan Singh Umramangal has appealed to the masses to build up public opinion against the terrorists. Among others who have reacted favourably to this suggestion are veteran columnist Khushwant Singh, Satpal Dang of the CPI and Dr Baldev Prakash of the BJP.

Most disturbing, perhaps, is the observation of Vijay Kumar that the terrorists' real target is the several lakh-strong Sikh readership of the three papers, especially the Punjab daily, *Jagabani*. Unsure of whether or not the media and the police would take up cudgels on his behalf, he sounds confident while saying, "Our readers would continue to subscribe to the paper even at the risk of their lives."

Vipul Mudgal/Amritsar



(Left) Newspaper hawkers and distributors demonstrate in Amritsar and (inset) Ashwani Kumar, a hawker who was gunned down by terrorists: the panic heightens

A talent to abuse

K.K. Tewari does what he's best at

SUNDAY: The Opposition, especially V.P. Singh, has said that if they come to power, they will make Doordarshan independent. Is your government afraid of doing this?

K.K. Tewari: Look, V.P. Singh is a big political thug. None of what he says has any meaning. I don't even wish to speak about a man who has no character, no ideas, no commitments, who can sell anything from his body to his soul for political office.

What I mean is why don't you evaluate the performance of the Janata Party government? The Indian public conducted this experiment (of electing the Janata Party to power) thinking that this would result in a new and more strengthened nation. They thought that this would result in greater prosperity and happiness all round.

But did any such thing really happen? The same (government) media which is being attacked now, was, in those days, heavily influenced by facism of the Jan Sangh and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) variety. Never before had the media come under such concerted attack by fascist forces.

In fact, these very forces broke up the Janata Party government. When the government was formed, because of the pre-eminence of the Jan Sangh and the RSS elements, Lal Krishna Advani got the information and broadcasting ministry, and Atal Behari Vajpayee got the external affairs ministry. But it is common knowledge how these people misused their authority.

They used the media to propagate all kinds of stories about Indiraji. The way Justice Shah (of the Shah Commission) conducted his enquiry was shameful for the entire nation, and a negation of all judicial principles. Unsubstantiated charges and accounts were not only broadcast over microphones, but were even shown on television. Cases that involved the stealing of eggs and hens were registered against Mrs Gandhi. She was charged with having stolen six eggs and two hens.

Somebody was just telling me that V.P. Singh has been saying that we are trying to get the Emergency back through the medium of the TV and radio. What I want to know is, how come the same man who was the hero of the so-called bad days of the Emergency, Vidya Charan Shukla, tales about whom were made much of by the Shah Commission, the

details of whose personal life were subject of gossip, has now become the leader of those who wrinkle their noses in distaste at the very name of the Emergency? What can you say about V.P. Singh?

There is another person, too. He used to sell paint for some company before, now he is busy playing the Chanakya of Indian politics. And newspapers are also busy promoting this coloured wolf. This country has had a long tradition of projecting a coloured wolf as a lion. So now a man like Arun Nehru is being called a Chanakya. A man who has thigh muscles in his brain is deciding on political strategies. The press has made a media monster out of a man who had no cerebral muscles, only thigh muscles in his brain.

Why do you criticise Arun Nehru and V.P. Singh with such bitterness?

I respect those who belong to the Opposition and are leaders of Opposition parties. I do so because there always has to be an Opposition in a democratic system. One cannot deny its existence. I criticise those leaders among the Opposition who have become weapons of destruction, centres of instability, those who are basically dishonest where policies are concerned, those who are thugs and imposters. I criticise those people. Who can possibly have any respect for Judas?

But why do you call V.P. Singh, Pamella Bordes?

See, I just said this by way of an extended metaphor. I said that, "V.P. Singh is the Pamella Bordes of Indian politics." What I am trying to say is that you also use metaphors such as these. Don't you? You say that 'two political parties are strange bedfellows'. If you take such statements literally, they are undoubtedly obscene. You also say that 'the honeymoon between these two political parties will soon be over'. But you don't take such statements literally. When I made that statement about V.P. Singh I was talking about his politically liberated behaviour. Just as Pamella Bordes is willing to go to bed with anyone for some favour, in the same way V.P. Singh is willing to go to bed with anyone to attain political power, and to settle scores with Rajiv Gandhi. Extending that metaphor, I say that he will sleep with anyone from Hershman, Haji Mastaan, Jyoti Basu and Atal Behari Vajpayee, to achieve his ambitions. He is even willing to sell his soul. This is why I say that he is the Pamella Bordes of Indian politics. He is beyond all feelings of shame or fear. He has destroyed all traditions of decency. He is just like that liberated woman, Pamella Bordes.

It is ten years since the Janata Party split. How would you compare the Janata Party of 1977 to the Janata Dal of 1989?

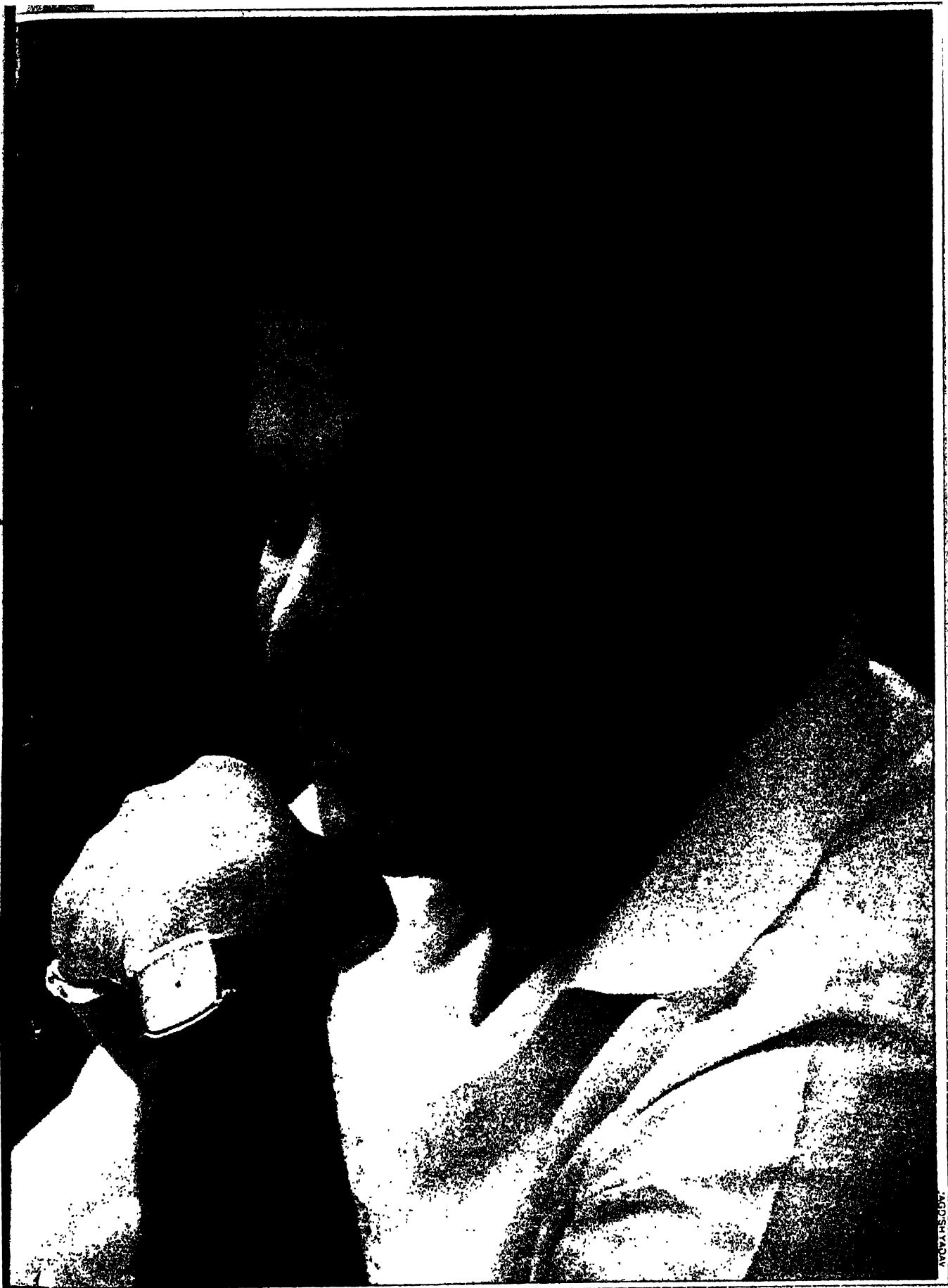
There is no difference, because the characters involved are the same. But actually, we should not compare the Janata Party with the Janata Dal. Because there was a man like Jayaprakash Narayan in the Janata Party.

In comparison the Janata Dal just has the eunuch figure of V.P. Singh. He is neither a man nor a woman. Who are the real people who are using this figurehead? It is actually foreign forces who are behind him. They are based beyond the borders of the nation. These people have chosen him because they know that JP is no more, and Rajiv Gandhi cannot be dislodged by the present lot in the Opposition. □

V.P. Singh will sleep with anyone, from Hershman,

Haji Mastaan, Jyoti Basu to Atal Behari Vajpayee, to achieve his

political ambitions. He is even willing to sell his soul



ANDREW TAYLOR

Two in the Bush?

● It was a friendship made, if not in heaven, then certainly in Texas. When George Bush became President of the United States, Rajiv Gandhi was quick to congratulate him, and diplomatic analysts on both sides recalled how as vice-president, Bush had hosted Rajiv at his ranch in Texas, and the two men were ole buddies.

Except that it hasn't worked out



GAUTAM PATOLE



Rajiv Gandhi (left) and George Bush: smoking the peace pipe in Paris?

that way. Not only has the US used Super 301 against India, but last week Bush gave Benazir Bhutto the kind of rapturous reception reserved for very close friends.

Where does that leave India and the US? And Bush and Rajiv? Who knows? The latest is that the two men may meet in Paris next month to smoke the peace pipe.

Resignation blues

● It was the work of a master media manipulator. Had Sharad Pawar, the powerful chief minister of Maharashtra resigned? *Mid-day*, a Bombay evening newspaper seemed to think so and went so far as to issue a special edition.

Except, of course, that Pawar is still chief minister. *Mid-day's*



RAJESH KUMAR
Sharad Pawar: pressuring the Centre

editor, Anil Dharker has an explanation. Pawar *had* sent in a letter of resignation, he says—so *Mid-day* stands by its story. Except that it was in the nature of a pressure tactic. After the story broke, Pawar got what he wanted out of the Centre, and kept his chief ministership. Small wonder then, that the CM refused to confirm or deny the *Mid-day* report!

The three musketeers

● They are an interesting trio: Chandra Shekhar, Chandra Swami and Dhirubhai Ambani. And for the last fortnight, the press has been going crazy speculating whether they met in Bombay.

The way the media told it, Shekhar and Ambani met the worldly Swami at Bombay's glitzy Oberoi Hotel, where

His Holiness was ensconced. Nonsense, says Shekhar. Well, half nonsense anyway. He did meet the Swami at the Oberoi, but it was at the godman's request.

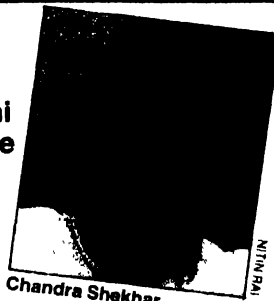
And Ambani? No, not at all. He was not present. Then what accounts for the reports? Shekhar says that the press got it wrong.

Ambani did meet the Swami that evening but half an hour separated Shekhar's departure and the mega-industrialist's arrival.

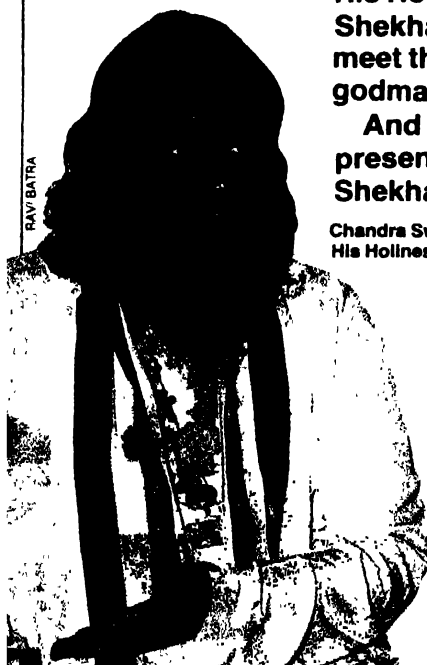
Fine, but did Shekhar meet Ambani at another place? No comment. And what was the regime's favourite businessman doing in Chandra Swami's suite? Working out a deal, perhaps.



Dhirubhai Ambani



Chandra Shekhar

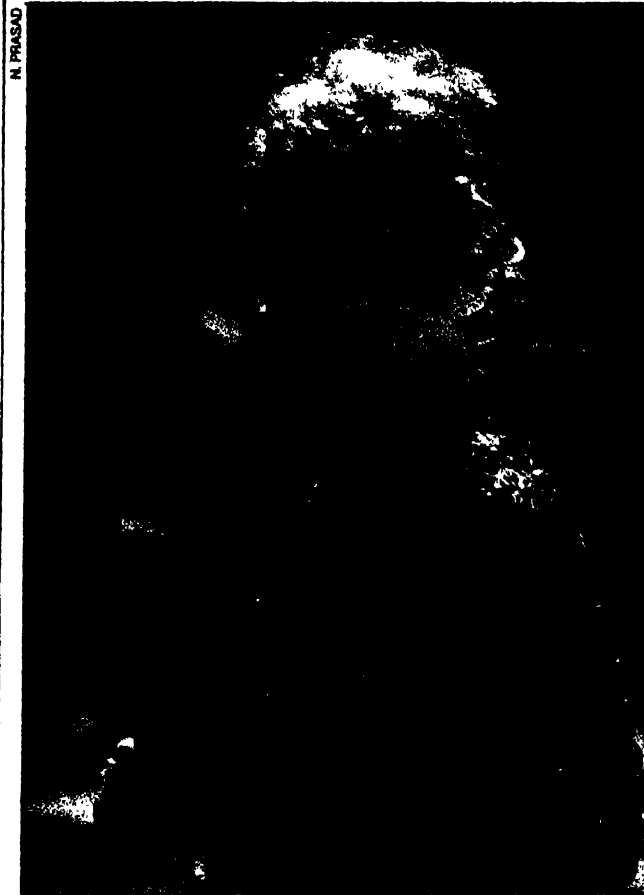


Chandra Swami:
His Holiness

Viswamitra and friend

● For months he kept the country guessing. Who would play opposite N.T. Rama Rao in *Viswamitra*? Sridevi seemed to be the obvious candidate. But an enigmatic NTR would neither confirm nor deny rumours about the casting. Now it seems that Meenakshi Seshadri has bagged the role, though, of course, NTR is still keeping mum.

Perhaps the mercurial chief minister now wonders why he is bothering with the film. Originally, its box-office receipts were to fund the Telugu Desam's election campaign. But now, as the film will not be released till long after the elections are over, the purpose seems unlikely to be fulfilled.



Meenakshi Seshadri: the final choice

Like a carbon

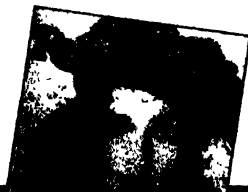
● Question: When is a bad desi imitation a good desi imitation?

Answer: When it's Alisha Chinai and she's pretending to be a Madonna clone.

Don't take our word for it. Ask

Madonna. Two months ago, Rolling Stone magazine asked the bosomy singer which of the many Madonna

Alisha Chinai and (inset) Madonna



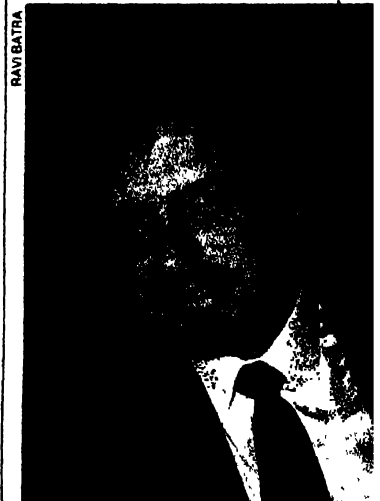
clones came closest to her. Well, she said, "There's one girl in particular, a girl named Alisha, who's had a couple of songs that ripped off the chord progressions of some of my songs. And her voice sounds so much like mine when I sing in a higher register, I was shocked. She's definitely one who stunned me."

So now you know. And, at least, it beats the hell out of bleating, "Log mujhe pyaar se Baby Doll kehte hain."!

To hell and back

● The first part of Sanjay Khan's ordeal is over. The actor was admitted to Bombay's Jaslok Hospital on 10 February, suffering from 65 per cent burns and given little hope of survival.

While doctors fought to save his life, he was beset by other problems—the Karnataka government filed a suit against him and a callous media sug-



Sanjay Khan: miraculous recovery

gested that he was faking his injuries to escape liability for the fire that destroyed the set of his *Sword Of Tipu Sultan*.

However, Khan seems to have beaten the odds and staged an amazing recovery. So amazing, in fact, that Jaslok has prepared a special presentation documenting how his life was saved.

Will he now pull off a second miracle and complete *Tipu Sultan*?

Never mind how many times hysterical wife Jayapada may threaten, and even at times attempt suicide, husband Shrikant Nahata continues at his philandering, regardless of all such attempts at emotional blackmail.

Neeta Puri, queen of the video screen, continues to be an abiding favourite. While their amorous tryst in a hotel room in Bangalore (where Nahata was discovered in the act by his outraged wife) is now part of history, secret assignations continue even now. At a recent party given by S. Raamanathan, producer of *Gangaa Jamuna Sarasawathi*, to celebrate the birthday of south Indian superstar Amrith, the duo was quite the cynosure of all eyes, as they went into their kootchie-koo routine in one dark corner after another.

But Neeta is living in a fool's paradise if she believes that she may make it as Mrs Shrikant Nahata. She's far from being the only starlet Nahata romances on the



Farha: taking over from Sridevi

side--another hot favourite is a sexy little-known (Danny's pet obsession in the pre-Gawa days) whom he takes along on his trips to Tirupati.

Neeta Puri: Nahata's new passion



Neelam: ditched

Talk about double standards. Dharmendra, he of the two wives and innumerable affairs on the side, has just asked youngest son Bobby to break off with lady love Neelam, or else...

What is even more surprising is that *beta* Deol has actually complied with this directive. As for Neelam, the latest is that she is trying desperately to contact Dimple Kapadia on how to hook a Deol and keep him. Whether the *Bobby* girl will oblige is hard to tell.

Farha wishes to displace Sridevi from the number one throne. Well, what's new about that, you may ask? Her methods for one. For, the Boy George clone has decided that the only way to upstage the *Mr India* girl is to put on lots and lots of weight. The argument goes that Sridevi was a success only because of her cherubic looks and the now famous Thunder Thighs. (Indian men, you know, like their women well-built.) And that her fall from grace was due, not to the arrival of Madhuri Dixit, but to her recent weight loss which makes her old, haggard and less than appetising.

And who do you think is eminently qualified to take over from Thunder Thighs? None other than the weighty Ms Naaz. Well, going by those shots of her in a pair of knickers, most certainly.

Whether wife Shivangi's publicly administered slap will rid Shakti Kapoor of his philandering remains to be seen. But it can be said with certainty that it won't cure him of his delusions of grandeur. The latest is that Kapoor has decided that he's only going to play hero, and that all producers who land up to sign him up as villain are going to be shown the door, politely but firmly.

The person who stands to benefit most from this misguided policy is Anand Balraj of *Ram Lakhan* and *Kahan Hai Kanoon* fame. Quick to realise that he was on to a good thing, Balraj has taken to sticking very close to Shakti in the proper sycophantic manner, in the hope that some of his rejects may well land up in his lap. ■

AMITA MALIK

The destroyer

Doordarshan cites shortage of cassettes as the reason for wiping out memorable programmes

It was just after John Grierson, the Father of the documentary movement died. I got a frantic message from The National Film Board (NFB) of Canada. They had decided to make a documentary on Grierson and since he had visited India too, had appealed desperately to Doordarshan, the Films Division and the Pune Film Institute to provide the necessary information. Not one of them had replied and the NFB with whom I had long standing connections, said that they had decided to make me their (honorary) consultant in India

heard of Grierson. And that I had had to practically hold a pistol to his head to persuade him to let Grierson address the young Doordarshan staffers, who being better educated, were eager to hear him. There were no arrangements made for recording the lecture, either. So I pressed my battered Sony tape-recorder into service. Later I got the re-broadcast of the TV programme on All India Radio on tape.

So, utterly red in the face, I wrote to tell the NFB that I could only let them have the sound track and they were able

to use one or two sentences of Grierson's from what was virtually my private tape of his telecast. And when the NFB generously listed my name in the credits, only below that of Paul Rotha, I was just about ready to jump into the Jamuna.

Over the years, whenever some celebrity died, and Doordarshan never ever managed to re-telecast even a still let alone a programme they had done themselves, I decided to be immodest and question them about this lapse. So, when John Masters, David Niven and Trevor Howard died, I rang up Doordarshan on every occasion to ask "You have my interview with him, why don't you telecast excerpts from what they said?" The reply was always the same "Madam, we are short of cassettes, so we had to erase them." And since I had been sure that the authorities would preserve them forever, I hadn't even kept the transcripts.

I am sorry for going on about my interviews with the greats which Doordarshan wiped out. But this is only because I have first-hand knowledge about this and can document what I say. I had jointly interviewed Marlon Brando and Satyajit Ray in 1968 for Doordarshan and left the floor entirely to them. They used this opportunity to carry on a most delightful professional chat. For many years after that Doordarshan would telecast the recording at least once a year. Last month when I asked for it, as I wished to make a transcript to be on the safe side, I got the stock reply. I shall come back later to what is, perhaps, the most criminal erasements in the sorry history of Doordarshan's non-existent archives, which seem to be reserved for politicians, not for cultural greats.

It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime break when I got Elia Kazan, Akira Kurosawa, Antonioni and Satyajit Ray together in the TV studios for a round-table discussion. It was one of those truly historic occasions and other television networks represented in Delhi would have given their right hand for telecast



K.K. Tewari: will he remedy matters?

and could I please help out? I said I most certainly would.

I thought then, this would be an easy task. I had done an indepth interview with Grierson for Doordarshan in which he had said some fascinating things—about the moribund Films Division, that India had the most beautiful and intelligent children in the world, how no Indian except Satyajit Ray had done justice to them on film, and much else. I rang up Doordarshan confidently and asked for a cassette so that I could send it to Canada.

"Well-ji", said the director of the Delhi Kendra, "We were short of cassettes-ji, so we wiped it out." I could not believe my ears, except that I remembered that his predecessor, had obviously never

If K.K. Tewari is not too busy destroying the Opposition on the small screen, he could spare some thought for preserving the priceless national legacy which Doordarshan's archives could provide for posterity

rights. B * Doordarshan got exclusive rights, since the cinematic greats were guests of the Government of India. A year later, when I asked the television authorities for the cassette to take a transcript for my book of interviews, I was appalled to hear that they had wiped it out. The information and broadcasting ministry, which had reproduced its transcript in its bulletin on the Festival, could not rustle up a copy either. Nor could the research and reference division of that august ministry. What these great masters had said, was, therefore, gone for ever.

The other criminal act was the destruction of the delightful visual chat between those two queens of the *thumri*, Rasoolan Bai and Siddheswari Devi. Speaking in their charming UP dialect, teasing each other mildly at times, saying the most fascinating things about their careers and their musical styles, their conversation was interspersed with brief snatches of song in their famous voices. Every time I think of that memorable recording, now gone for ever, I feel like crying. I wonder if any viewer ever recorded any of these programmes so that they can be restored to the national archives where they belong, and to such other interna-

One of Doordarshan's criminal acts was the destruction of the delightful visual chat between those two queens of the thumri, Rasoolan Bai and Siddheswari Devi

tional cinema archives as would preserve them with more respect, care and responsibility.

When I asked one of Doordarshan's senior staff how such valuable material could have been erased, lost or destroyed, I got a classic reply: "When we changed from low band to high band, these recordings became obsolete, so they were lying all over the place and some got damaged, some disappeared and that is how it happened. The junior staff were very irresponsible too, and did not look after them properly." Since my informant was a very senior staffer, I

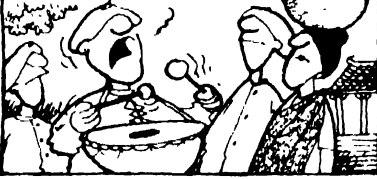
was tempted to ask him what those placed higher up were doing. But he sounded so irresponsible that I decided to get the matter clarified by Mr Rao, the chief engineer of Doordarshan. Mr Rao said that the confusion took place during the change-over from black and white to colour during the Asian Games and also when Doordarshan changed from two-inch to one-inch tape. The only comfort he could offer was that some tapes had been preserved and transferred. I did not wish to embarrass him by asking whether these were largely of politicians. Especially since we all know that to be true.

I would like to end with a challenge to Mr K.K. Tewari, who, I hope is not too busy destroying the Opposition on the small screen to spare some thought for preserving the priceless national legacy which Doordarshan's archives could provide for posterity. Some of the best programmes are lost for ever but KKji, since you are a professor, what about devoting some thought to important matters such as this for a change? The professors I knew, such as J K Galbraith, S.K. Bose, G.C. Chatterji and my own father, Prof. P.C. Roy would certainly have done something about it. So what about it, KKji?

THE
RAJA
OF
OUCH

RYNWA

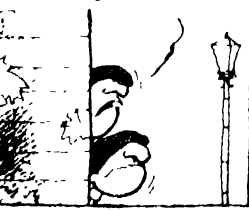
HEAR YE, HEAR YE... ALL
SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES ARE
BANNED FORTHWITH!



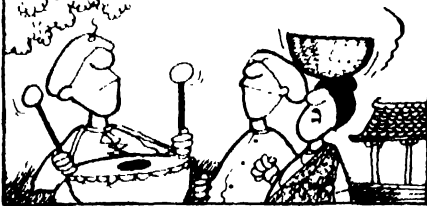
ANYONE CAUGHT SMUGGLING
WILL BE HUNG AT ONCE!



THAT'S THE END OF
FREE ENTERPRISE!



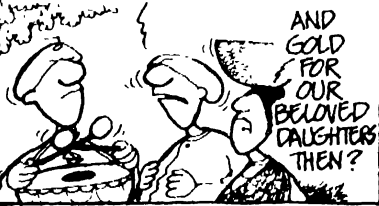
SO NO MORE IMPORTED
PERFUMES AND BLADES, EH?



AND NO MORE PIRATED VIDEO
CASSETTES AND ELECTRONIC
GODDIES, EH?

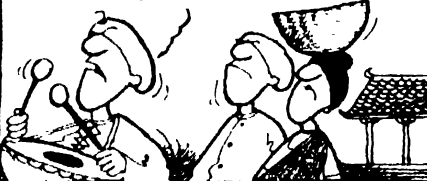


WHAT ABOUT AKATS TO PROTECT
OURSELVES FROM TERRORISTS?



AND
GOLD
FOR
OUR
BELOVED
DAUGHTERS
THEN?

LISTEN! I'M ONLY A STREET-CRIER!
IF YOU HAVE ANY COMPLAINTS.....
HAVE A WORD WITH THE RAJA!



WE'D LIKE A WORD
WITH THE RAJA!



THAT'S
NOT
POSSIBLE!



WHY NOT?



HE'S GONE
ABROAD!
ON A HOLIDAY!



One midsummer night

Saeed Jaffrey's Oberon earns critical applause

Summertime in London's Regents Park. The smell of English roses in the air. The mood: heady. The music: just right. And romance: inevitable. It's as if the weather man had hushed away the clouds for a brief spell of madness.

It's flower power and the spirit of the laid-back Sixties, as the cries of the swans from the nearby lake spill over into the theatre. And it's Shakespeare time as well—for being played on stage is the Bard's own ode to the potent summer months: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Guy Slater's production sets the play in the free-loving Sixties. Gossamer fairies are replaced by guitar-strumming hippies and Shakespearian lovers by John Lennon look-alikes.

Oberon, the fairy king, swings in Maharishi Mahesh Yogi garb and plays Cupid without care. And complete with the Mahesh Yogi wig, minus the Mahesh Yogi giggle, is none other than Indian actor Saeed Jaffrey, returning to Shakespeare after 18 years.

As the fairies jive and swirl, drink happy potions and make love among the trees, Oberon plots to win back the love of his wife Titania (Sally Dexter). His chosen emissary is Puck, elf of the forest and drifter of the night. Slater's Puck isn't all fun and mischief. He's a cool dude, dressed in a glamorous velvet outfit complete with knee-high boots and dark glasses. Quite the fixer of the night, he is assigned to give love potions to the estranged lovers and make things go right.

Shakespeare's love potion isn't hashish or magic mushrooms. It's the juice of a flower which, when squeezed over the eyes, makes the person fall in love with the first thing he sees. Puck flies through the night on Oberon's instructions, drugging Titania, and the young lovers who wander through the forest. Titania falls in love with a donkey's head, the lovers get mixed up, and everything is madness as the flower potion takes over.

As evening fades into night, the lovers weary of fighting, Oberon commands Puck to remedy the damage, and soon all is well again. Titania forgets her brief romance with a donkey and swings out on Oberon's arm, wildly dancing all the

while. By morning sanity returns, the love affairs are sorted out and wedding plans made. The Beatles sing *All you need is love*, and peace prevails.

Jaffrey delights as Oberon. With top billing for his role as the fairy king, Jaffrey's performance went down very well with the audience and, more importantly, with the critics.

"It was marvellous coming back to Shakespeare," Jaffrey told SUNDAY. "It's almost 18 years since I've acted in a Shakespeare play." Saeed's last Shakespeare sojourns were in the Sixties, when he acted in productions such as *Taming Of The Shrew* in America.

The return to Shakespeare wasn't without its difficulties though. Apart from the lack of time—Jaffrey is booked

up to the full in Hindi film productions—the business of getting the verse and tone correct in a Shakespearian play wasn't easy. "You can't get a comma wrong," he said. "And the verse is so strict that you feel like kicking yourself if you don't get it right." So, it was all-out rehearsal and a lot of hard work before the critics could be satisfied.

Jaffrey is hoping that the return to Shakespeare lasts—if Bollywood allows, that is. "I hope it's the Royal Shakespeare Company after this," he said. In fact, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* marks Jaffrey's return to the London stage after a long period, too. His last performance in a West End production was in 1979. "Some of the barriers against Black and Asian actors and actresses are coming down now,"

Saeed Jaffrey, complete with Mahesh Yogi wig, though minus the Mahesh Yogi giggle, delights as the fairy king, Oberon



Saeed Jaffrey in a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: a Mahesh Yogi-like figure

said Jaffrey. "Afro-Caribbeans have been slightly luckier than Asians, but now I think the doors are opening for us as well."

Guy Slater's play, for one, had a totally multi-racial cast, with Puck being played by a Black actor and Jaffrey playing Oberon. But it was only Slater's interpretation of the play that allowed for the casting. Oberon is a Mahesh Yogi-like figure, hence Saeed Jaffrey. Puck a night-time fixer, hence a Black actor.

Though Roshan Seth, Ayub Khan Din and Rita Wolff have surfaced in some West End productions, it's still a long way before Asian actors manage to go beyond the *tandoori* stereotype and get a major role on the White-dominated stage. Getting their act together isn't the only answer.

Shrabani Basu/London

The heritage of Manda

In this extract from his controversial biography, V.P. Singh: The Quest For Power, Janardan Thakur traces Manda's treacherous and murky past



The "sacrifice" of Rajputra Vishwanath must have been particularly gratifying for Vinoba Bhave in view of the dark and dismal record of the Manda Estate throughout the freedom movement

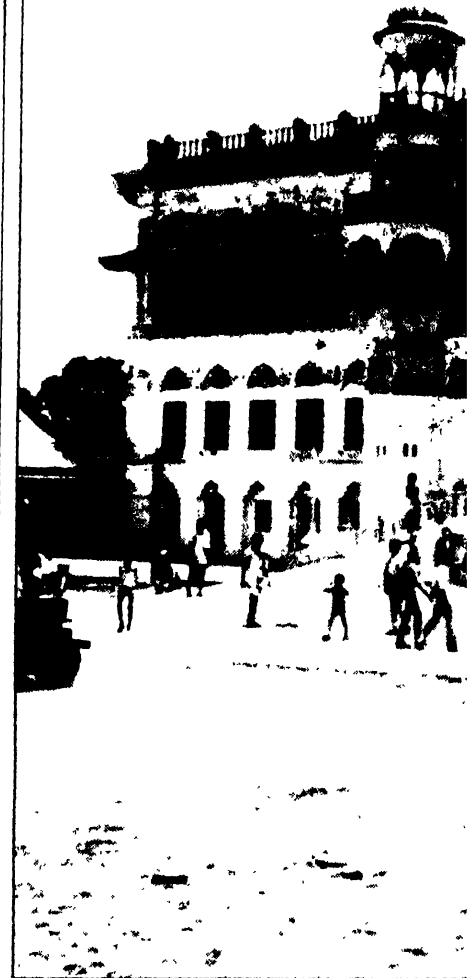
A good point to start is perhaps that dramatic moment on 27 December, 1965, when the 34-year-old Raja of Manda—the fortieth in line from Raja Jaichand, as his family tree proudly tells you—drew out his sword, slit his thumb and planted a *tilak* of blood on the forehead of the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. So overwhelmed was Shastri by the young Raja Saab's gesture that he turned to his wife Lalitaji and said, "This is your fifth son." "Adoptions", as we shall see, were to play a key role in our hero's career; and this in a way had been another adoption.

Others had preceded, one of which could make another good take-off point. Visualise a younger Vishwanath, in his late twenties, following his elder brother Sant Bux Singh around—"like Lakshman following Rani", quips the latter. Sant Bux had just returned from a seven-year sojourn in England, highly politicised, what with his dabbling in Fabian socialism and the rest of it, and was keenly observing the socio-political milieu in India.

Zamindari abolition was in progress and the large landholders were in jitters. All manner of devious plans were in the offing to beat the provisions of the land-ceiling acts. In Uttar Pradesh, the conflict between the zamindars and the tenants had been one of the acutest, almost a "class struggle" at some points during the 1930s, and numerous appeals had been issued by Mahatma Gandhi to tenants and zamindars, telling the latter to become "trustees and trusted friends of the tenants...the Zamindari system to be defensible, must approach the conditions of a joint family..."

But the new rulers of the land had declared the zamindari system indefensible, and by mid-century the propertied classes stood warned of the threat looming ahead.

At such a time Vinoba Bhave had brought them a new ray of hope. Walking from village to village, he had talked of non-violent social revolution and asked large landholders to contribute one-sixth of their holdings as *bhoodan* for distribution to the landless. Phrasing



The palace at Manda: sordid past

his appeals in the saintly idiom which goes down so well in this country, he had spoken of renunciation and sacrifice, and argued that it was the *dharma* of the rich to protect the poor. In a way he had opened a new escape route for the rich.

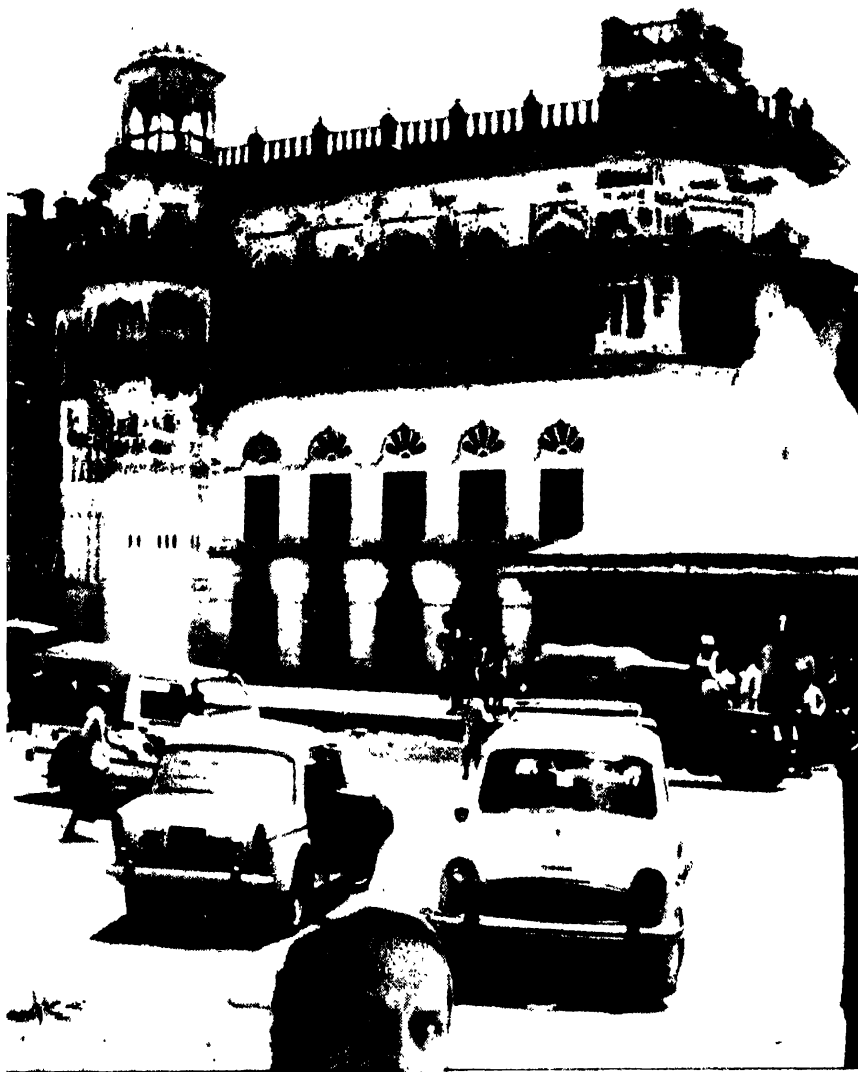
Vishwanath had started going to *bhoodan* meetings in the neighbourhood of Manda, and even Sant Bux was quite unaware of the thoughts leavening in his brother's mind until the day he had stood up to speak at one of the meetings and made a public pronouncement. "I am giving away all my land to Bhoodan," he had declared.

Sant Bux Singh was nonplussed, and had later rebuked V. N., as he always called Vishwanath, for his rash pronouncement. But the "damage" had been done.

The "sensational pronouncement" had brought Vinoba Bhave to Allahabad in mid-58, to anoint his "princely disciple".

Sant Bux Singh tells you the words of Vinoba Bhave still ring in his ears:

Rajputra Siddhartha ne tyag kiya to



sansar ka kalyan hua. Rajputra Vishwanath ne aaj jo tyag diya is se vavishya men Bharat ka kalyan hoga. (Prince Siddhartha's sacrifice redeemed the world. The sacrifice that Prince Vishwanath has made today will redeem the nation in future...)

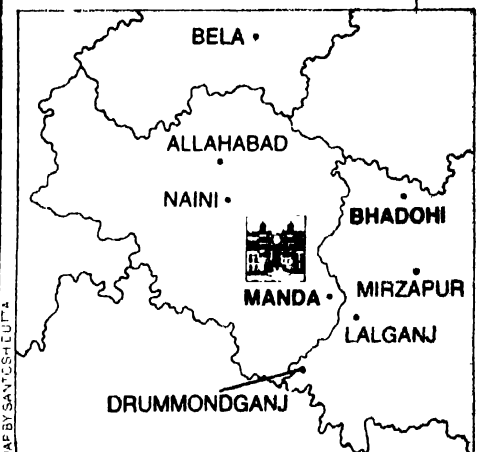
The "sacrifice" of Rajputra Vishwanath must have been particularly gratifying for Vinoba Bhave in view of

V.P. Singh: Manda's adopted son

the dark and dismal record of the Manda Estate throughout the freedom movement. V. P. Singh's adoptive father, Capt. Raja Ram Gopal Singh, was a dyed-in-the-wool Anglophile and a British loyalist to the core. A freedom fighter could enter his domain only at his own peril; he was lashed and tortured. According to some, the Raja had got a long shoe (*adhai haath ka joota*) specially made to beat up the "agents of Gandhi" Vishwanath Pratap Singh's own father, Raja Bahadur Raja Bhagwati Prasad Singh, was never far behind his Manda cousin in displaying his loyalty to the British masters, so much so that the White Sahebs often described them as their "two faithful..."

But perhaps they were only following in the footprints of their illustrious forebears. Let us then go back briefly to the recorded chronicle of the house for whatever light it might shed on the makings of our own hero.

After Raja Jaichand was sent to his watery grave by the very same man whom he had initially invited, namely,



Muhammad Shahab-ud-din Ghori, to vanquish his enemy Prithviraj Chauhan, his wife and some other members of the royal family fled eastwards and settled down at Kera Mangraur, near Mirzapur. There they remained for about 15 generations, and during this period established their authority over a large tract of country which had been the domain of Bhars and other aboriginal tribes.

Come to the sixteenth generation from Jaichand. Bhuraj Singh or Bhuraj Shah, had three sons—Deo Dutt, Kundan Deo and Bharti Chand. The eldest, Deo Dutt, gave in to the lure of office and became a Musalman. Those were the days of Sher Shah. Kundan Deo and Bharti Chand moved westwards, and the latter made his home in Kohrar, a small *riyasat*.

Kundan Deo is the one who needs



During the Mutiny, Raja Chhat arpal Singh, the grandfather of Raja Ram Gopal Singh, protected the Government treasury, of which he took charge from the authorities, when they were unable to protect it themselves...

following. With his family he moved towards Khairagarh, which was then ruled by a Bhar Raja called Lorikaditya. The principalities of Khairagarh, Vijaypur and others were under him. Kundan Deo appeared in the court of Lorikaditya pleading that he had at one time been a Raja and his desire now was to serve under a Raja. The Bhar Raja was impressed and appointed him the Senapati (General) of his army. Some time later, Kundan Deo who was the father of three marriageable daughters, put it before the king that being a Raja by ancestry himself, he could not possibly give away his daughters to lesser mortals. They could be married only to Rajas. Lorikaditya married the eldest daughter, and he got the other two married to the Bhar Rajas of Bhadoi and Dalmau. On the night before the Holi festival, all the three new brides poisoned their husbands, and Kundan Deo declared himself the Raja of all the three estates.

For a long time after this, Bhadoi was called "Bhar-drohi", and in about nine or ten villages around Dalmau (Rae Bareilly district), the people do not celebrate the Holi festival until fourteen days after the actual date.

It was Kundan Deo who, perhaps out of a sense of insecurity, went and settled down at Manda. Apart from the three daughters, Kundan Deo had two sons—Bhojraj and Ugrasen. While the former took Manda, the latter obtained Vijaypur.

Six generations later came Puran Mal, who also had two sons, Lakhan Singh and Chhatarsen. While Lakhan got Manda, the latter got the *taluka* of Barokhar as his share. The property remained separate until the end of the 18th century, when the Manda ruler treacherously recovered Barokhar after putting the entire Chhatarsen clan to the sword.

Lakhan Singh, the elder son of Puran Mal, was followed in succession by Bir Singh, Rudra Shah and Mardan Shah, the last of whom had two sons, Prithviraj Singh and Chhatarsal Singh, both born the same day, presumably from two wives. The two divided the property,

Prithviraj holding Manda and Chhatarsal taking *taluka* Daiya—the branch that was to bear our hero.

Six generations after Prithviraj came Israj Singh, who lived to see the cession of Allahabad district to the British. He had joined hands with the British and for services rendered to Lord Wellesley against the Baghel Rajas of Rewa (ancestors of the former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Arjun Singh), he



"I was not allowed to see my natural parents...It was just that my guardian did not want me to have any connection with my natural family"—V.P. Singh

obtained a grant of 31 villages revenue-free in perpetuity.

Israj Singh died in 1805, and his successor Rudra Pratap Singh spent the greater part of his life translating the *Ramayana* into Hindi verse, whether as a penance for the sins of his ancestors or because there was little else he could do by way of living it up like a *raja*, is not quite known. His father, Israj Singh, must have been more than just a toady of the British, for he had mortgaged his entire estate to a banker of Benares, Moti Chand. On his death the estate had been taken over by the Board of Commissioners, the successor being allowed only Rs 2000 a month for maintenance. Rudra Pratap Singh was later permitted

to 'engage', but he was unable to manage his property, which was hopelessly encumbered at his death in 1827.

The situation deteriorated further under his successor, Chhatarpal Singh, and in 1838 the settlement of many villages was made with the resident communities, the Raja's rights being reduced to a *malikana* of ten per cent of the revenue.

But then Chhatarpal Singh beat even Israj Singh and his other forebears in his disloyalty to the land. Allahabad was to prove one of the most perilous grounds for the British during the Sepoy Mutiny or what is now called the First War of Indian Independence. Here the rebellion was led by a *faqir*, Maulvi Liaquat Ali, who had won for himself a considerable reputation for sanctity and was backed by the zamindars of Chail. The Maulvi had set up his standard in the famous Khusru Bagh and declared himself 'Government of Allahabad' proclaiming the rule of the Badshah in Delhi. For nearly two weeks, the Maulvi and his forces freed the city from the British who were confined to the fort which was under threat of being stormed any time.

Reaching supplies to the British were the loyalist forces of Chhatarpal Singh. And then word arrived from the camp of the Rani of Jhansi, directing the forces of the Maulvi to proceed towards Kanpur. On the way they bivouacked near Kha-

V.P. Singh (left) grieving by his brother, C.S.P Singh



ga, in the principality of one Dariao Singh, where they learnt that British soldiers were camping at some distance with money for the Treasury. The forces of the Maulvi fell upon them and would have gained control, but Chhatarpal Singh came to the rescue of the British. Dariao Singh was killed, the Maulvi was arrested and sent to "Kala Pani" where he died. His captured men were hanged to 52 *imli* trees around village Khajuri. Some still call it the "Bawan Imaliya Gaon" (the village of 52 *imli* trees).

At last some of Manda's past must have been at the back of Vinoba's mind as he hailed the latter-day "Prince Siddhartha". He was certainly well aware of the estate's more recent record.

Whenever a freedom fighter was subjected to humiliation and torture in the Manda estate and the information was brought to Mahatma Gandhi at Swaraj Bhawan, he used to say, "*Utna area chhod do...* (leave out that area)."

Manda, to him, was beyond the pale.

In such a soil was Vishwanath transplanted at age five. Why exactly he was the "chosen one"—for Manda was a much bigger estate than Daiya any day—is not really known. It seems to be a conundrum even to Sant Bux Singh, the first born to the elder Rani of Daiya. It was the second and much younger Rani who had given Raja Bhagwati Prasad Singh of Daiya his first son, Chandra Shekhar Prasad Singh, who

dy: different upbringing



was later to become a judge of the Allahabad High Court. Then came Sant Bux, sixteen months later to the first wife, followed by Vishwanath Pratap Singh to the younger Rani, a year later. Two more sons, Harbux and Rajendra Singh, were born to the first Rani.

Being the eldest born, C.S.P. Singh was to become the Raja of Daiya and it was understandable that when the Raja of Manda wanted to adopt one of the sons, Raja Bhagwati Prasad Singh didn't offer him his first son. But why, instead of offering the eldest son of his first wife, that is Sant Bux Singh, did he offer the second son of his second wife? Was it because the second was his favourite wife? Unlike the first she was from "more common Rajput stock" and so the



The Raja in a Rajput turban

possibility of her parents having manoeuvred things in favour of their grandchild was considered rather remote.

"If it was looks that mattered," says Sant Bux, "we were both quite handsome, except that V.N. was somewhat fairer than me." All that he can say is that for some reason his father decided to give away V.N. rather than one of the other sons.

Fairness of skin was certainly something that could have weighed with the Raja Bahadur of Manda, who was a *pucca* Sahib, Anglophile to his finger tips. All manner of stories are still told in and around Manda about Ram Gopal Singh's western lifestyle and his "recklessly licentious" ways, but for the sake of reliability let us depend on what little glimpses into his life Sant Bux Singh can give us.

When Ram Gopal Singh was around 18, marriage proposals poured in from

all over. One of them came from a family in Madhya Pradesh, and it was accompanied by a picture of the girl. Ravishingly beautiful. The young Raja Bahadur sought the approval of elders in the family, which was duly given.

All was set for the wedding but then came the rub. It turned out that the status of the bride's family and its position in the Rajput hierarchy was not at all befitting the honour of the Manda *gharana*, and the elders who had earlier given their assent were now totally opposed to the match. But they were reckoning without the host. By then Raja Ram Gopal Singh was dead set on either marrying the same girl, or not marrying at all. The girl's photograph had charmed him beyond his wits. And so, in the teeth of opposition from all sides, even physical opposition at some points, the Raja Bahadur set out to claim the bride he had set his heart on. His *baratis* were even waylaid during the journey by those opposed to the wedding, but the Raja Bahadur made it to the bride's place and got married.

In triumph he brought his bride home, to discover that she was not the girl of the photograph at all. No semblance whatever. The photograph was of a dancing girl from Calcutta. The Raja Bahadur had been cheated. He had



Aish Mahal: the Raja's Allahabad residence

brought back a different, plain-looking if not ugly, girl. And at what cost!

He left the palace and his bride for good and set up home in the Club House nearby. He kicked out all his Hindu servants and retainers and brought in Muslims or *firangs*. "He began drinking himself to death."

By the time his five-year-old heir arrived, he had already gone a little consumptive. The frightened little boy who had been wrenched from his parents and brothers and brought into a totally alien atmosphere must have been

totally at sea. Soon, Raja Ram Gopal Singh was a confirmed TB patient and he wouldn't let the boy anywhere near him. A Scottish couple, Mr and Mrs Cooke, were employed to look after the little princeling.

As V.P. Singh was to recount much later in life, "I was not allowed to see my natural parents because I was supposed to grow up a Manda boy. My mother said she wanted to see me but that my adoptive father would not allow. It was just that my guardian did not want me to have any connection with my natural family. I was to forget them.... Even in his will, my adoptive father said that the Daya family should have nothing to do with me."

When V.P. Singh was barely eleven, his adoptive father died, and his natural family re-entered his life. Not without another wrench, though. By then the boy who had come to his new surroundings at five had quite forgotten what he had left behind, and his then guardians, Amar Singh Mathur and his family, had become his "family". When his father, Raja Bhagwati Prasad Singh fought and regained the custody of his child, he had to be physically lifted and taken away to Daya.

A deep sense of loneliness and insecurity was to become a lasting feature of Vishwanath Pratap Singh's life, a feature which manifested itself in various ways. Loneliness must have made him withdraw into his inner self, and the sense of insecurity that had taken hold of him so early in life precluded him from having trust in anyone. At the time when we were out to retrace some of the missing links of his career in Allahabad and Lucknow, one of the recurrent questions we encountered about V.P. Singh was, "Is there anyone who is close to him? Does he really trust anyone?" None, they meant to say.

After the death of his adoptive father in 1941, there were collaterals of the family challenging his adoption in court, and the boy had to be kept under constant armed guard, whether it was at school or elsewhere. Recalls V.P. Singh, "I was alone in a bungalow in Varanasi, my life in danger..." After a time in Col. Brown School at Dehra Dun, he had been sent to the Havett Kshatriya School in Benares, part of the Uday Pratap College, which had come to be a natural Alma Mater of the "blue-blooded Rajputs" of the region. He lived in a part of the principal's bungalow, a sequestered life under armed guards.

Right from his school days, V.P. Singh had begun having a special image of himself, as is clear from some of the anecdotes he himself recounted much

later—in fact, after his break with the Congress:

With some pride, he (V.P. Singh) remembers being a school prefect in an atmosphere that was laden with "authoritarian discipline". His school-mates had regard for him but there was distance between him and them. "I used to be regarded as a strict disciplinarian, there would be pindrop silence when I entered the hall." Apparently, regard for Singh's abilities ("They knew I had won all the prizes for the school and enhanced its reputation," says Singh) overcame the sense of distance when Singh took a stand on elections to the students' union.

The school principal had nominated the head prefect to contest the union elections. Singh says that the idea that the teachers should take an interest in the elections and set up candidates "came as a real emotional shock". "In those days," he recalls, "we held our teachers in high esteem. We thought they were all above us...there is the image of fairness and so on." Thus he "immediately offered" his resignation as a prefect—the first of a series of resignation offers in his career. Singh's refusal to toe the principal's line, he says, brought the other boys to ask him to be their candidate. They had another candidate, he remembers, but admiration for his stand had led them to offer to withdraw the nomination in his favour...

(Emphasis ours).

Those who would seek to understand his mental make-up and his political style would do well to go over the anecdote



V.P. Singh's adopted father, Raja Ram Gopal Singh, was a British loyalist to the core. A freedom fighter could enter his domain only at his own peril: he was lashed and tortured



V.P. Singh talking to farmers: zamindari background



The Raja touring villages: living down the past; (Inset)

from his school days, for they tell of a man who not only takes calculated steps but is for ever conscious of the impact he is making.

But let's move to another anecdote:

Once, the conscientious Singh, who never failed to attend a single class, decided to skip his poetry class in order to prepare for an inter-collegiate debate. Afterwards, he won a shield for the college (or rather high school) but his irate principal, instead of being pleased with the trophy, wanted to know why Singh had skipped his poetry class. Says V.P. Singh, "Imagine, I had won the



P. Singh: the lonely leader

shields and prizes but all the principal wanted to know was why I had cut the class without permission. *I mean, it's like Rajiv Gandhi asking me about Fairfax!*" Despite the parallels constantly being drawn and the tendency to see a repetition of themes in his life, it was clear that Singh's first real contact with the political world and political ideas came when he was at university...

V. P. Singh had taken to homespun and was doing his best to behave as much like a Bhoodani as he could, so much so that his father and many others

of his clan started calling him "paglau" (lunatic). They thought he had gone off his rocker. It may be all right for you to behave like this, he was told, but what about your wife and children? Don't you have any sense of responsibility towards them? In 1955, he had got married to Sita Kumari, daughter of the Raja of Deogarh-Madaria in Rajasthan, and his two sons had been born.

Vishwanath's renunciatory pose was frowned upon by his kith and kin. Maybe he could do with his new lifestyle but Sita Kumari could hardly do without her silk and finery. Someone had pointed this out to him and he had shot back, "If she is in trouble, wouldn't I do the same

for her?"

The man's political critics and detractors have often claimed that after V. P. Singh announced the gift of all his land to Bhoodan, his wife

filed an affidavit in court that her husband had done it in a "fit of insanity", some have even gone to the extent of saying that V. P. Singh was actually

admitted to the Agra mental asylum for a while. No evidence of either is available, but the action certainly created some resistance in the family, and at least Sant Bux Singh would not rule out the possibility that some lawyer or retainer of the family might have given an affidavit in court.

In any case, Vinoba Bhawe heard of



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the grumblings and called V. P. Singh over to Bangalore, where he asked the latter to take back some of the land for the family and the children. "I cannot take back what I have given away," V. P. Singh is said to have maintained, but when pressed further he said whatever land was returned he would give away to the college he had built.

The Raja Saab was at a loose end, trying hard to create an identity for himself. He must have been overtaxed by more mundane problems, such as clearing away the heavy debts that encumbered the Manda estate

Eighty-year-old Jalaluddin, who had for long years been a personal "account-keeper" of Raja Ram Gopal Singh, said he had left a debt of Rs 18 lakhs when he died in 1941—a huge sum in those days. But Sant Bux Singh, who ought to know better, says the debt was not Rs 18 lakhs but Rs 44 lakhs.

Profligacy of the successive Rajas had squeezed the estate dry. C A Bayly, a scholar from Cambridge who made a close study of the socio-political conditions of Allahabad during the period 1880-1920, wrote:

The weakness of the local zamindars was a result of their relatively small size or economic difficulties. But the personalities and life-style of individual landholders played their part. In 1878 only nine individuals in the district paid land revenue of more than Rs 25,000 per year. Three of them were among the mercantile magnates. Another was the Maharaja of Benares... Then there were the Rajas of Daya and the Raja of Manda (Gaharwar Rajput). But these latter magnates were debt-ridden and plagued with long minorities.

Most of the huge debts were owed to the Banias, which might perhaps explain the contempt of former Rajas for the business class.

Weighed under the burden of the past and all too aware of what lay in the future, the calculating mind of Vishwanath Pratap Singh may well have decided that there was not much point in holding on to the rocky wastelands of Manda. There was no way he could stop the decadent old fort from crumbling, no way he could regain the lost power and the glory of his ancestors except perhaps by taking to a completely new course. The dramatic stance of renunciation must have seemed the best bet.

He had to give up, or at least appear to be giving up, in order to redress the balance of the past. ■

V. P. Singh: *The Quest For Power* by Janardan Thakur
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The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has sent separate show-cause notices to all the players who had romped off to play four exhibition matches in the United States and Canada immediately after the cricket series between India and the West Indies ended. They had done so despite seven telex messages being sent by the BCCI asking the players to return to India immediately after the Caribbean tour ended.

According to the Board rules, the cricketers could face a fine or suspension, or both. Before going on the tour, each of the cricketers had signed individual contracts with the Board and agreed to abide by its provisions. One of the clauses in the contract forbade the players from going anywhere after the tour, without the express permission of the BCCI president. Another clause clearly stated that the players could not play any exhibition matches for a year after this tour.

When the Board's executive committee met in Bangalore last month, the unity had to be seen to be believed. Hitherto, all meetings, however innocuous, underlined the groupism that is so evident in this body. But, on the issue of the north American tour, the BCCI was unanimous. They heard the report of the secretary, Ranbir Singh, who started by saying that the players had, in fact, asked the Board president's permission through the tour manager, Venkatraghavan, to play a few matches in the United States and Canada after the completion of the tour.

Initially, there was point-blank refusal. After repeated pleas, the BCCI chief, Biswanath Dutt, said the players would be allowed to spend a holiday in America or elsewhere if they so desired, but on no condition were they to play cricket. The correspondence, which started midway through the tour, continued till the series in the West Indies was almost over but, till the end, Dutt refused permission to play.

The players ignored the Board directive and went ahead with their plans. They had found sponsors in both the Uni-

On a sticky wicket

Cricketers who played in exhibition matches in North America come under fire from the Board of Control for Cricket in India

ted States and Canada and played three limited-overs matches against a Pakistan Eleven and one against a West Indian combination. They were paid up to Rs 35,000 (in dollars) per match and provided free board, lodging and sight-seeing jaunts for themselves and their wives.

More than the money the players garnered, it was their attitude towards the Board that irked the executive body. Almost every member wanted severe penalties imposed on the players. But Dutt chose a softer line, suggesting that a committee be formed to decide on the course of action.

Accordingly, a five-member body was constituted, with Dutt, ex-president P.M. Rungta, I.S. Bindra, W. Kanmadikar and Madhav Mantri constituting the committee. At the first meeting in Bombay, all members barring Bindra were present. Whether or not Bindra's absence was tactical or otherwise, the

members were unanimous in their opinion that the legal aspects of the move to issue show-cause notices should be covered first.

That is why the meeting carried on for three hours. More important, it was held in Rungta's residence rather than in

the Board's well-appointed premises. The need for secrecy, members felt, was paramount at that stage.

The players, of course, are treating all this with disdain. They feel they have done no wrong in augmenting their income from cricket. And they have been quick to point an accusing finger at the Board. First on their list of grievances is the sudden hardline approach of the Board. "We had taken it for granted that the authorities would let us play. It's happened so often in the past that we were sure there could be no objection this time," said one cricketer. What most players feel is that the Board's only grouse was that India had put up a bad show in the Caribbean. "But that is to be expected, isn't it? How many times has India—or, for that matter—any team done well against the West Indies on their own grounds? If this is the reason, it's sheer vindictiveness," the player said.

Former captain Bishan Singh Bedi had come out in open support of the Board. The current players resent this attitude. "Bedi himself had flouted the contract, so how come he's taking on this holier-than-thou stance?" one player asked. But he had nothing to say about Pataudi and others who have all criticised the attitude of the cricketers.

Actually, the players are now grouping together to evolve a common strategy. They hope to revive the now-defunct Players' Association so that they could present a united front. Almost all

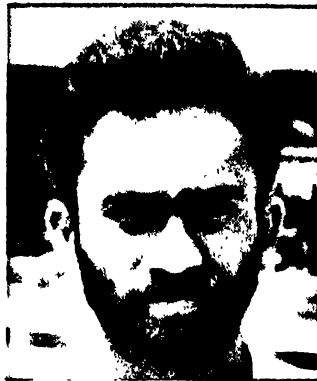
BCCI chief Biswanath Dutt (second from right): showdown with the players



THE ONES WHO DIDN'T PLAY



NAVJOT SIDHU



SABAH KARIM



K. SRIKANTH

■ Srikanth had an injury; Sidhu faced murder charges and had to report to court; Sabah Karim wasn't given an offer to play in the US

of them have been consulting legal experts in an effort to get out of what is expected to be a sticky wicket. The only ones on the tour who are not affected are K. Srikanth, Sidhu, Sabah Karim and W. V. Raman. Srikanth had to come back midway owing to an injury, Sidhu had to report to court over the incident of alleged assault and death, Raman apparently had other commitments and Sabah Karim wasn't given an offer to play in the United States.

So all these players will be fit and ready to represent the country should the Board decide to suspend or ban the "rebels". There are several others, young and old, who could fit into the Indian team. It is not as if the current players are indispensable, though at present some of them do form the cream of Indian talent.

But neither the Board nor the players are thinking about that most drastic step yet—though Dilip Vengsarkar will have to answer for much more than mere

dollar-gathering. In an interview to a sports weekly, he lashed out at players like Azharuddin, charging them with being afraid to face fast bowling. In an outburst so typical of a man going downhill, Vengsarkar also said the Board hadn't given him the best available players and that the umpiring was

Over the years, Indian cricketers have been paid much less than their foreign counterparts. And this includes Pakistan. The Board should certainly try to remove this anomaly

biased. Unfortunately, in his list of excuses, there was no mention of his own form—both as batsman and as captain. Except for a brief flutter, he was woefully out of form. As for his captaincy, almost every member of the team felt that he did not deserve the mantle. Instead of encouraging his colleagues, he castigated them. And there were many players in the squad who could have given him a lesson or two in tactics on the field.

Vengsarkar had faced a six-month suspension last year for violating Board rules. This time, too, he has done so by talking about the attitudes of the players, instead of assessing performances. The rules don't allow it. Whatever the outcome of this wrangle over money-making appearances abroad, it is now certain that Vengsarkar will not be asked

to lead India again for quite some time.

But, all said and done, the players do have a genuine grievance. Over the years, Indian cricketers have been paid much less than their foreign counterparts. And this includes Pakistan. The Board should certainly try to remove this anomaly, as our players are certainly not inferior to cricketers from our neighbouring country or, for that matter, from any other country.

Of course, this is not reason enough to flout rules. And the offence is more serious because they played in countries which are associate members of the world cricket body. And no permission was asked or given there. Not only did they play as an Indian XI, they even sported the official sweaters.

Whether or not he feels he is in with a chance to captain the Indian side again, Kapil Dev broke the silence of the players on the issue by saying in an interview that this violation of rules should be seen as a one-time offence, not to be repeated by the players. Following his lead, most "rebel" players have reportedly taken a soft line. While not openly admitting their violation of the rules, they have pledged in their replies to the show-cause notice never to flout BCCI directives again.

Ultimately, the BCCI may not suspend the players. The cricketers could plead guilty and ask forgiveness, thus opening the way for the Board to save its face, too. A fine could be imposed. But here, it is important to make the fine large enough to hurt the players. Otherwise, such a decision could open the floodgates of indiscipline. After all, a note saying sorry and a cheque for a small amount which, again, could be covered by the sponsors of future rebel tours, won't hurt either pride or purse.

So, where do we go from here?

Arijit Sen/Calcutta



On the north-east

B.P. Singh's account lacks an empirical base

To anyone with a serious interest in north-east India, the book makes compulsive reading—not for its empirical base, but for the conceptual framework adopted. In *The Problem Of Change: A Study Of North-East India*, Singh displays a clear understanding of the major issues involved in the process of change in this sensitive region. But he often fails to elucidate his contentions with sufficient ground information. So, for a reader with sufficient interest, but without a adequate data base on the north-east, many of Singh's observations may seem impressionistic, though they are anything but that.

The weak empirical base is revealed in the introductory chapter itself, in which Singh says: "The occupation of Imphal by the Japanese and the battle between the Allied and Axis powers at Kohima during the Second World War stirred the people of the north-east and gave them a new spatial consciousness".

The Japanese never occupied Imphal, they just came close to capturing it. Which is why Geoffrey Evans and Anthony Brett-James titled their account of the Imphal campaign after a Japanese proverb—*Imphal: A Flower On The Lofty Heights*. That is, a flower highly desired but out of reach.

Also, it is wrong to say that the people of the north-east secured a new spatial consciousness during the Second World War. It would be more appropriate to say that the War had such an effect on the Indo-Burma frontier. Assam and Tripura, or for that matter, the tribals of present-day Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh were hardly touched by the War.

Similarly, it is wrong to say that: "The earlier Hinduisation of the tribes (of Tripura) led to the migration of Bengali Hindu peasants from neighbouring East Bengal districts." The extent of Sanskritisation of the Tripura tribes is debatable, though the Sanskritisation of Tripura's ruling dynasty has never been in doubt. This perhaps explains the rapid growth of Christianity amongst the

fringe tribes of Tripura in the past decade.

Also, the migration of Bengali Hindus from East Bengal was not due to Hinduisation of the tribes, but because of royal efforts in that direction. The Tripura rulers wanted a Hindu population to man the various rungs of monarchical administration. They also encouraged the settlement of Bengali peasants with a view to bring fresh areas under settled wet-rice cultivation so that they could augment their revenues. But the settlement pattern ran into occasional resistance from the tribal formations as early as in the Thirties.

The Tripura rebels surrender : uneasy calm



The book displays a clear understanding of the major issues involved in the process of change in the north-east. But the author often fails to elucidate his contentions with sufficient ground information

Singh's chapter on "The Political System" is sketchy and lacks an analytical orientation. Only Assam comes in for detailed study. Even states such as Manipur and Tripura, where electoral politics took root immediately after Independence, and where even insurgent activity is not free from the compulsions of electoral dynamics, are dismissed in only a paragraph and an election data table.

The writer's perception of the north-east seems to be considerably influenced by his intimate knowledge of Assam, and the lack of it where other parts of the region are concerned. He is particularly

ignorant about Tripura and Manipur—both erstwhile princely states with their own history of socio-political growth.

For instance, his analysis of "Land and Tribal Society" in the north-east is almost exclusively concerned with Assam and the states born out of it. Land alienation is a direct cause of tribal unrest in Tripura but, barring a general observation, Singh does not deal with the dynamics of land alienation in the state at all.

The real strength of Singh's book lies in the chapter on "Administrative Philosophy and Institutional Framework" for the north-east. Given his background in government and his advantage of having witnessed

the performance of officialdom at close quarters, Singh is perhaps the right person to throw much-needed light on this aspect. Some of his suggestions, such as the one for a joint intelligence structure at the regional level, merit close examination.

On the whole, it can be said that each chapter of Singh's book can be developed into a major research work and credit is due to him for having dealt with (if only cursorily, in some instances) nearly all the major aspects of the north-eastern problem in just over 200 pages.

Subir Bhaumik

The Problem Of Change: A Study Of North-East India by Balmiki Prasad Singh. Published by Oxford University Press. Price: Rs 110.

SUNDAY WEEK

BEGINNING 25 JUNE 1989 BY AMRIT LAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

This is not a favourable week for you. You may be faced with an unhappy incident at home, and this may cause you a lot of concern. Beware of your enemies, they may hatch fresh conspiracies against you. Moreover, your subordinates may not be very cooperative. The phase, however, is good for romance.
Good dates: 25, 26 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 6
Favourable direction: West



LEO (21 July—20 August)

A week of excellent prospects. Those in service will gain recognition and be praised by their employers. Doctors and scientists will do well. Students will do well in their studies. This is a good week for love affairs. For those who want a partner, be on the lookout and you might find the person of your choice.
Good dates: 26, 27 and 1
Lucky numbers: 1, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: South-west



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

Hard times are ahead; so muster all the courage that you can and try not to be despondent. Do not look forward to solving your problems this week. You are advised to be extra careful in deciding on your moves and actions. A minor mistake may turn out to be extremely expensive.
Good dates: 26, 29 and 30
Lucky numbers: 3, 4 and 7
Favourable direction: South



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

This will prove to be a fairly good week for you. Those connected with intellectual or artistic pursuits will find this the most suitable time to achieve the desired goal. Exercise tact and patience, otherwise you may have to pay a price. Do not quarrel with anyone, for this will go against your self-interest.
Good dates: 26, 28 and 30
Lucky numbers: 6, 7 and 9
Favourable direction: North



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

A very bright week lies ahead of you. Some exciting prospects await you on the professional front. Take full advantage of them and forge ahead with your plans. Do not hesitate to follow the advice of female relatives in your family. Socialites will have a busy time.
Good dates: 25, 28 and 1
Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: South-east



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

A week of brilliant prospects awaits you. So forge right ahead with our plans. The domestic front will provide you with all the support that you need this week. Friendships are in the offing. A word of caution: be wary of new friends of the opposite sex. Keep an eye on your health.
Good dates: 25, 28 and 29
Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 8
Favourable direction: West



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

This is the right time to embark on new ventures. You will achieve success on all fronts. Intellectuals and artists will be rewarded for their efforts. Those in service will be praised for your ability to take the right decision. But take care, the health of your beloved might show signs of trouble.
Good dates: 28, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: South



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

A week of steady progress. Some problems may crop up on the professional front, but they will not hinder your progress. The domestic front may give you some cause for worry. Those with unmarried daughters are advised to start marriage negotiations rightaway. Take care of your health.
Good dates: 29, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: North



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

This will prove to be a favourable week for you. Luck will continue to smile on you provided you keep a check on your purse. A bright week for sportsmen who will be crowned with success. The domestic front will continue to be a source of joy. A promotion is not unlikely.
Good dates: 27, 29 and 1
Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9
Favourable direction: South-east



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

This is a good week for you, you will gain financially. But a word of caution, do not be too extravagant. Exercise tact while dealing with your subordinates. Concentrate on your work and do not mingle business with pleasure. This could lead to problems later on. Keep your temper under control.
Good dates: 27, 28 and 30
Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 8
Favourable direction: East



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

This may turn out to be a fairly good week provided you have courage and patience to combat professional and domestic problems. For those in business, this is not the time to undertake any new venture. Exercise tact and circumspection while dealing with those in authority.
Good dates: 28, 29 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 9
Favourable direction: East



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

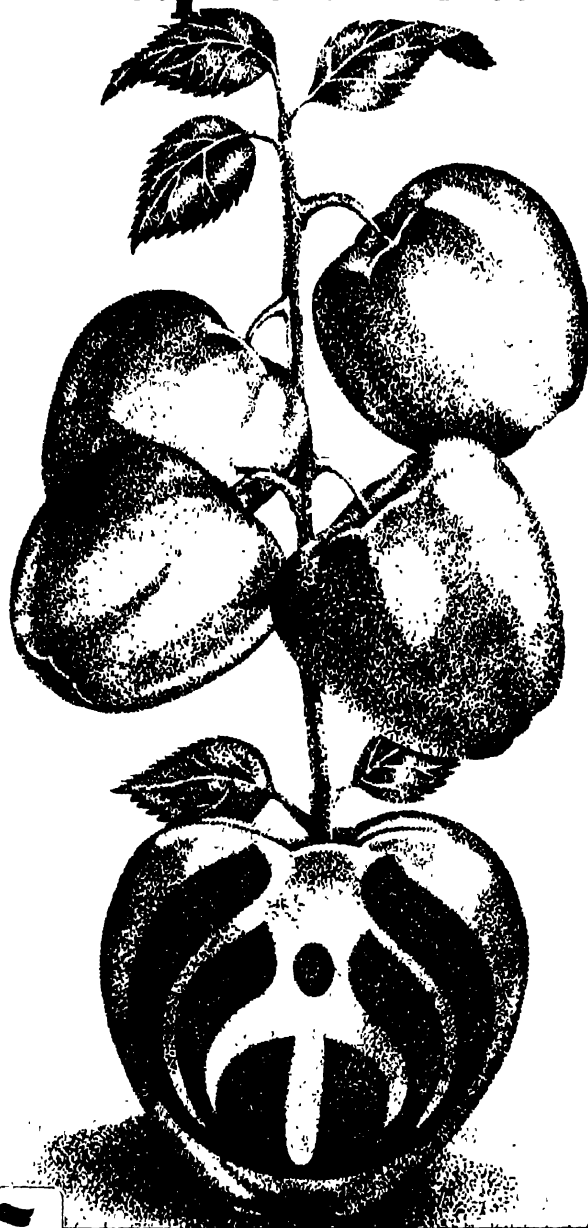
This unfortunately is not a very good week for you. Your family members will tend to avoid you and your friends will give you some cause for anxiety. However do not be disheartened for this is only a passing phase. Be courageous and your problems will soon be over.
Good dates: 28, 30 and 1
Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 5
Favourable direction: North-west

Star Partners: Virgo—Taurus

Both the Taurus man and the Virgo woman get along well with each other, but there are some differences too. He is a jealous spouse, and this could cause tension between the two. But because she is patient and forbearing, the crisis may not last long.

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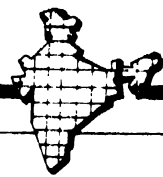


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Lost...and not found

It's two months now and Jayalalitha is still not to be seen in public. Her admirers are running scared, sure that some harm has come to the 'balcony baby' of Poes Garden. One among them, Shyam, the editor of a popular Tamil periodical, has submitted a habeas-corpus petition in the Madras High Court, asking that the court take action against M. Natarajan, a close aide of the AIADMK leader. Natarajan, he said, was holding Jayala-



BISHWANATHAN RAKSHIT

Jayalalitha: making herself scarce

litha in "illegal custody" against her will. A division bench of the court deferred the hearing of the petition, but speculation about the lady's whereabouts continues unabated.

The rumours doing the rounds are many, and each places Jayalalitha in a different location. While some say that the lady is suffering from arthritis and is currently being treated in a naturopathy clinic near Bangalore, others insist that she is recuperating from some mystery illness in a hotel in Goa. Some in the AIADMK hierarchy believe that their leader is stationed in her Poes Garden bungalow itself, but has made herself scarce so as to resist pressures brought upon her by partymen.

But why has Jayalalitha chosen to go underground in

this fashion? Insiders maintain that this is part of the grand strategy of keeping a distance from the hoi polloi. Operating on the principle that familiarity breeds contempt, the lady has decided to cut down on public appearances.

And like most others, this lesson, too, was taught to her by her late mentor, M.G. Ramachandran.

Rajiv's little lamb

If it's Rajiv Gandhi, there's bound to be Subramaniam Swamy. Political observers in Karnataka are increasingly coming to this conclusion.

Apparently, every time the Prime Minister pays a visit to Bangalore, Swamy too decides to pop by. On 28 April, Rajiv visited the city to attend a convention on Panchayati Raj. On the same day, Swamy addressed a press conference in Bangalore, demanding a probe into the alleged kickbacks received by those involved in the 128-megawatt diesel generator project at Yelahanka.

Gandhi touched down at the Mangalore coast on 26



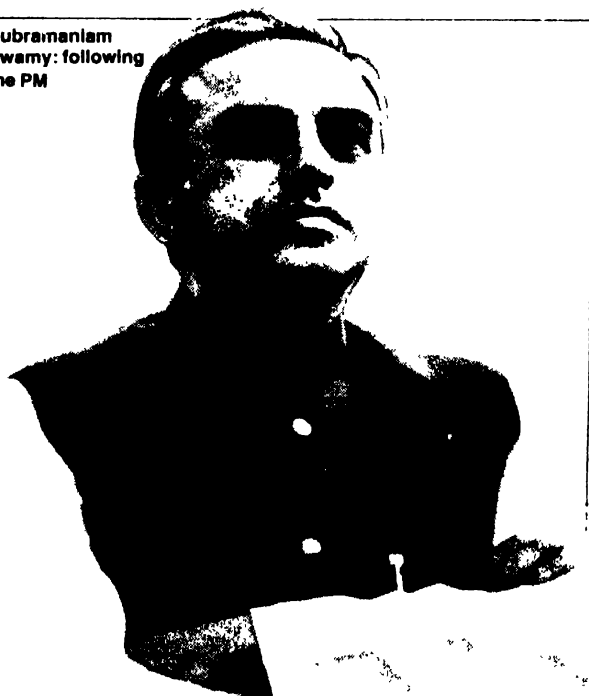
Natwar Singh: employing military intelligence

May for a few hours to address a public meeting. The Janata Party maverick could not match the peripatetic PM this time. Instead, he contented himself with holding a press conference in Delhi, where he announced with great *elan* that the Janata Party would have no truck with the Janata Dal in the state elections.

On 14th June, Rajiv visited Bangalore yet again, to attend the Nagar Palika Sammelan. Swamy, predictably, was back in the city, this time armed with a nine-point memorandum, which he handed over to Governor Venkatasubbiah, asking him, among other things, to investigate the various corrupt deals of a fellow Brahmin.

No prizes for guessing who Swamy was talking about.

Subramaniam Swamy: following the PM



Assessment time

As elections approach near, most members of Parliament are busy assessing the odds on their re-election. And K. Natwar Singh, Union minister of state for external affairs, has decided that he doesn't stand a ghost of a chance from Bharatpur.

The latest is that Natwar Singh intends shifting base to Mathura. In the last elections, Manavendra Singh, an Arun Nehru protégé, had won this seat on a Congress(I) ticket. Only to defect to the Janata Dal. Gossip has it that Singh has employed military intelligence to assess his chances.

How accurate their information will be remains to be seen. After all, isn't it said that military intelligence is a contradiction in terms?

Our fragile biosphere

Environmentalists have always complained that while the ministry of environment goes through the projects of public sector companies with a fine tooth comb to ensure that the biosphere is not ruined, they refuse to upbraid the private sector.

But sometimes even the government's actions jeopardise the environment. Like the Maharashtra government's decision to acquire 1,774 hectares of land for setting up a huge complex for producing hazardous chemicals and petrochemicals. This had the 109 residents of Jaigadh (in Ratnagiri district) up in arms.

And for once, the public won. The Bombay High Court passed orders restraining the government from taking over the land, or pursuing any course of action relating to the petition "until further orders".

Media shy

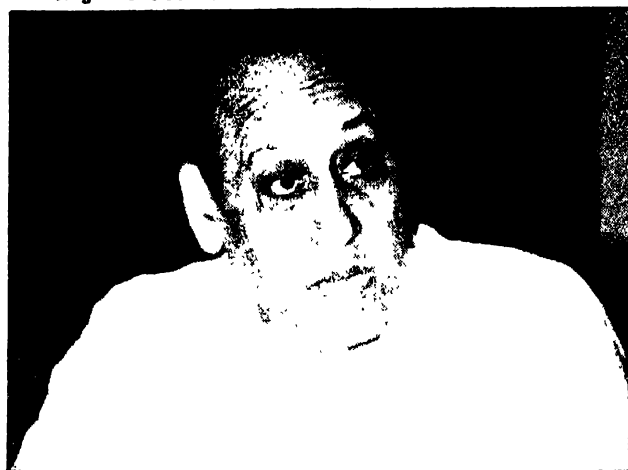
President R. Venkataraman's recent tour to the African states has gone largely unreported in the Indian media. And perhaps that can be largely attributed to the head of state's media shyness. Unlike his predecessor, Giani Zail Singh, who very nearly turned Rashtrapati Bhavan into a Press Club annexe (such was his love for the journalistic lot), and insisted on carting a large press entourage wherever he went, Venkataraman is very wary of publicity.

This time, even the news agencies were kept out of his foreign tour and the President relied only on Doordarshan and the Films Division to record his jaunt abroad for posterity. What's more, such were the austerity measures that even Eduardo Faleiro, minister of state for external affairs, who accompanied the President, was not allowed to take his wife along.

Silence is golden

It's not just the Indian communists who have reacted to the recent events in China with insensitivity. The Congress(I) is equally guilty on this count.

K.N. Singh: no to counter-revolutionaries

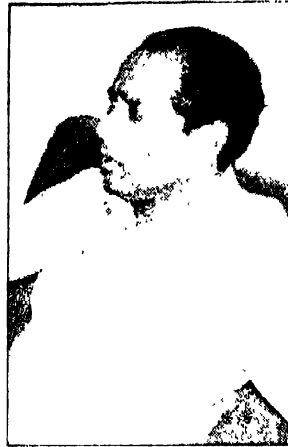


Venkataraman: wary of publicity

Recently the general secretaries of the AICC(I) got together to discuss the events at Tiananmen Square. Some were of the opinion that while the party had to toe the government line and refrain from commenting on the internal affairs of another country, the Youth Congress needn't be bound by any such restrictions. The younger lot, they felt, could publicly condemn the massacre and mourn the dead.

But one among them, K.N. Singh, who likes to describe himself as a Leftist, insisted that this would amount to supporting the "counter-revolutionaries". (Yes, that's how he chose to describe the students.)

Predictably enough, Singh prevailed, and the suggestion of the others was struck down.



Eduardo Faleiro: going it alone

Not on

It is no secret that there was no love lost between the late Veer Bahadur Singh and the Raja of Manda. And nobody was surprised when V.P. Singh did not attend the funeral of the former minister for communications.

It's what happened later that has become matter for disapprobation. Thirteen days after V.B. Singh's demise, the *teharava* ritual was organised at Gorakhpur. About one lakh people were expected to attend at Veer Bahadur's native village, Harnai, and entry was by invitation only.

There was one uninvited guest, though—V.P. Singh, who landed up escorted by a cavalcade of cars, all bearing the green Janata Dal flag. Raja Saab, properly mournful, embraced the late leader's children, said that he would look after them in their father's absence, and as proof of his good intentions, promised to visit them every month.

That was all very well. But what happened next shocked all those present. Apparently, V.P. Singh asked the son and daughter of Veer Bahadur to join the Janata Dal.

Even if the Raja is in such desperate straits that he needs to go on recruitment

drives, surely this was hardly the occasion to indulge in high pressure sales talk.

Promises, promises

It's amazing what uses one can put political influence to. Take the case of Union minister of state for agriculture Shyam Lal Yadav. His daughter recently got married to an IAS officer of the Sikkim cadre. If one goes by rumour, the groom agreed to the marriage on the express condition that his cadre be changed—to that of Uttar Pradesh. The minister promised to do the needful and the marriage duly took place.



Shyam Lal Yadav: all for a son-in-law's sake

Now comes the moment of truth. Will the father-in-law be able to keep his promise? It's not going to be easy. All processes at the ministry of personnel and public grievances have been fully computerised and it's next to impossible to manipulate things at a lower level. And the only person who can oblige, minister P. Chidambaram, is very very insistent that no such request will be entertained.

But maybe Chidambaram will relent just this once. After all, it's a question of saving a marriage. ■

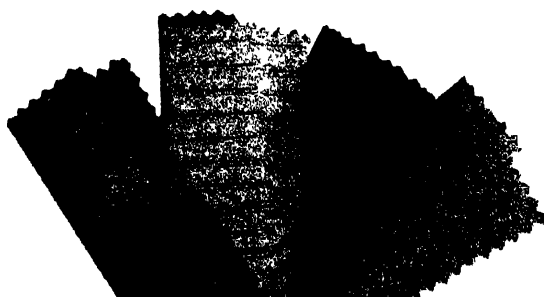


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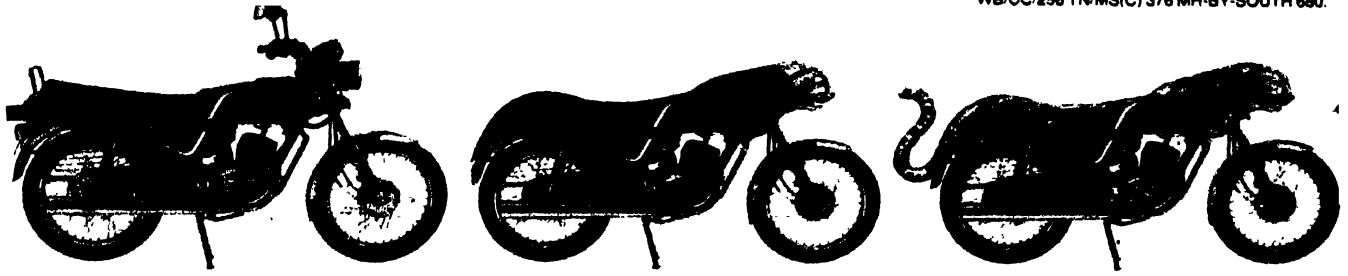
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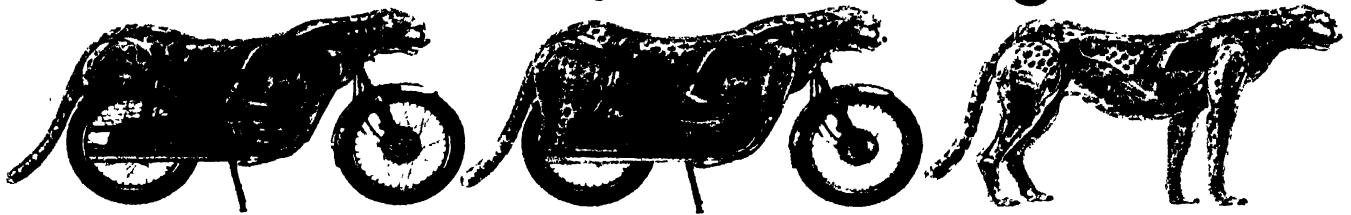
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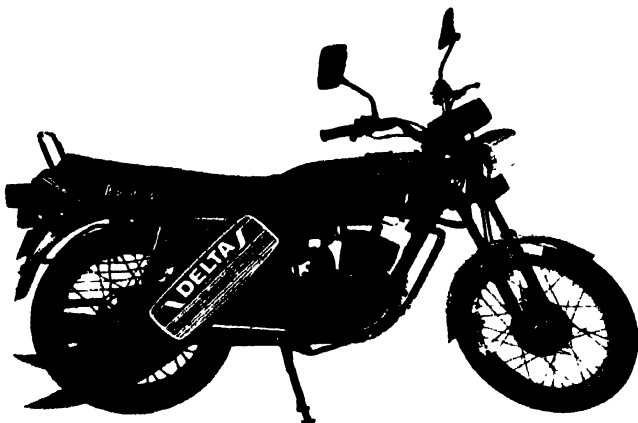
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SUNDAY

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DREAMS DIE FAST

1979

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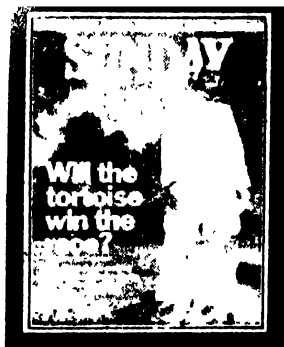
The much-maligned Air-India flies out of the red with a spectacular performance; Indian Organic sells Computer Point, India's largest computer retail chain, to B.K. Modi; and, the Montana car project runs into trouble.

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LETTERS

Biased stand

The report was more rhetorical than realistic suggesting perhaps that the author was swayed more by anti-Nepal propaganda than by an objective analysis of facts and realities (*The unwanted Indian*, 4—10 June). Nepal has repeatedly clarified that the work permit system was introduced for planning and development purposes only. Therefore, the education system will not be affected by it. Stories about Indian teachers losing their jobs because of the work permit system are thus baseless. Finally, Nepal is a sovereign, independent and peace-loving country fully committed to the principles of the UN Charter and the ideals of the non-aligned movement. As a believer in the principles of peaceful co-existence, Nepal legitimately expects that there should be no interference in its internal matters. The author would, perhaps, have appreciated Nepal's views better had he written the article with an open mind on Nepal.

Ram Bahadur K.C., Royal Nepalese Consulate General, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Made to forget

Election manifestos are merely vote-catching devices (*Promises, promises*, 21—27 May). In reality they are only guidelines for leaders to give a dream to all those who are yet to enjoy the fruits of democracy. It is quite obvious that they will never be implemented simply because after the elections



Police at an India-Nepal border outpost: strained ties

are over, the victorious party as well as the Opposition are so busy tearing each other to pieces that the manifesto becomes a forgotten document.

The Election Commission would do a great service by disallowing manifestos to save the people from misguidance. In fact, the political parties should be asked to inform the people about the rampant corruption in their ranks. And then let the voter decide.

Panna Lal Mundhra, Calcutta (West Bengal)



The PM on his way to a rally

■ With the approach of the general elections political parties will begin to make their rounds of promises to the electorate in the hope of getting more votes. There will be oaths to improve constituencies and the usual talk of working towards the betterment of the general public. However, once the elections are over, the promises will be forgotten. Politicians have become so involved in improving their prospects that they have little time to look at the electo-

rate which has voted them to power. It is time the people of the country realised that election manifestos are made to be forgotten.

Supriya Paramanik, Barakar (West Bengal)

Setting an example

It was an unusual story (*Wedding in the ward*, 4—10 June). Babita and Naresh Kohli have set an example to other couples. When dowry deaths and suicides have become the order of the day, Naresh Kohli's decision to marry Babita in the hospital ward was indeed a noble gesture. Those who burn their brides for dowry should now hang their heads in shame. However, there is hope for society with people like Naresh Kohli around.

Pragya Mathur, Ferozepur (Punjab)

■ It was good to know that there are progressive people like Naresh Kohli in this world. In the midst of evils like dowry, Kohli's gesture was commendable. Your magazine did well to publish the news of this unusual wedding. Our congratulations to the newly-wedded couple.

Reba and Subrata Roy, Durgapur (West Bengal)

Stills please!

You have recently written about Hema Malini's daring love scenes with

Naseeruddin Shah in the film *Rihaae* (*Khaas Baat*, 21—27 May). While Dharmendra will no doubt be fretting and fuming, we would be interested in seeing stills of the film. For, don't pictures speak better than words?

V.P.K. Rao, Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

Nepotism

Devi Lal's statement, "If I don't take my own relatives, should I appoint the relatives of Bansi Lal?" clearly indicates his intentions (*Sight and sound*, 14—20 May). He has already appointed his relatives to various posts in the Janata Dal who should serve him well if



Devi Lal: all in the family

the party comes to power after the elections. It is a sad commentary on Indian politics that many of Devi Lal's relatives are embroiled in a number of scandals and controversies. To think that these men could perhaps rule the country in the near future!

M.A. Razzak, Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

Caribbean catastrophe

By excluding Mohinder Amarnath from the team, the Board of Control for Cricket in India has no doubt paid a heavy price (*The Caribbean misadventure*, 21—27 May). It was

not only an unbalanced team, but many members even feigned injury to escape the pace attack of the West Indies. However, after the damage had been done, it was hardly wise on the part of the manager or the captain to blame the players for wilting under the West Indies pace bowling.

If the BCCI wants to restore the prestige of the game in India, it should include veterans like Pataudi, Gavaskar and Vishwanath on the selection board. Lastly, one must pay heed to Vengsarkar's advice; after all he has served as captain in the West Indies and knows the shortcomings of his team.

Sariful Hussain, Dibrugarh (Assam)

Voice of the people



Arun Shourie: undeterred

The government has come down heavily on the Express group simply because Arun Shourie and his editorial team have unearthed a number of skeletons in the Congress(I)'s cupboard (*The battle for the Express*, 16—22 April). The government has, time and again, initiated repressive measures against the newspaper, but to no avail. What Rajiv Gandhi has perhaps not realised is that in a democracy, the fourth estate is the voice of the people and this voice cannot be silenced.

Narendra Mohan Pant, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)

Scientists and imposters

To describe Dr V.J. Gupta as "one of the founding fathers of Indian geology" is an insult to all those pioneers, now dead, who laid the foundations of geology in the country in the nineteenth century (*Himalayan hoax*, 28 May—3 June). The enormous scientific output of Dr Gupta, including books, have always been looked upon with suspicion by the Indian geological community, especially in the Geological Survey of India. For long there have been doubts about the

veracity of his 'discoveries'. The constraints of being government servants have prevented the GSI scientists from voicing their doubts in public. And there are geologists too, mainly in the academic field, who have gained recognition by twisting facts and publishing research papers. If the science of geology is not to suffer irreparable damage, it is time these geologists were exposed.

S.M. Mathur, former director, GSI, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)

that year Chandra Shekhar's name did not rank anywhere among the top 50 leaders in the country.

C. Damodaran, Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh)

■ The columnist is wrong in saying that Chandra Shekhar is keeping quiet in the face of continued attacks from V.P. Singh. From the very beginning it has been Chandra Shekhar who has criticised each and every move that the Raja has made. Keeping personal differences aside, these two political stalwarts must work for the victory of the Janata Dal in the next parliamentary elections.

Ritesh Mishra, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)

■ If one were to analyse the political graphs of V.P. Singh

Birds of a feather

Udayan Sharma seems to be biased against V.P. Singh (*The importance of being Chandra Shekhar*, 4—10 June). Chandra Shekhar is the stumbling block to achieving Opposition unity. He has created problems at every stage for the Janata Dal. The columnist writes that V.P. Singh cannot match Chandra Shekhar's political acumen. Can he ignore the fact that the Janata Party split on many occasions under the leadership of Chandra Shekhar? Moreover, wasn't it Chandra Shekhar who encouraged dissidence in Karnataka? Are



Chandra Shekhar addressing a rally: uncompromising

these instances of his political acumen?

The columnist further writes that in 1977 Chandra Shekhar could well have become Prime Minister. This idea is far-fetched. For, in

and Chandra Shekhar, the former is sure to finish a poor second. Chandra Shekhar enjoys the reputation of being an astute politician as well as a good thinker.

V.P. Singh on the other hand is a clever politician. He is ambitious and craves for popularity. Whenever a debate of national importance takes place, the Raja emerges as a confused person. Even within the Janata Dal, V.P. Singh is trying to reign supreme and is in the process attempting to sideline Chandra Shekhar.

At the moment, both leaders must patch up their personal differences and work for success at the national level. A word of advice to Chandra Shekhar: a bit of compromise in politics is essential for one's survival.

B. Ganesh, Jamshedpur (Bihar)

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Can the Raja Saab do it?

There is no doubt that V.P. Singh is the strongest Opposition leader today (*The way of the tortoise*, 11—17 June). He is a popular leader in Uttar Pradesh and his image and integrity are intact. Perhaps his only weakness, as has been pointed out in your magazine, was a lack of firmness. However, this negative aspect is now a thing of the past with the Raja beginning to assert himself. Since the other Opposition leaders seem to be spent forces, it is up to the Janata Dal president now to ensure an Opposition victory at the next polls.

Ritesh Misra, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)

■ Today V. P. Singh is the only person who can lead the country. With the numerous scandals hounding Rajiv Gandhi's government, the Raja's chances of winning the elections are bright. V. P. Singh has withstood the tests of time, as well as the taunts of the Congress(I). His decision to quit the party at the Centre was a good one. At least the Opposition has a worthy leader now. We have faith in him.

Radhika Sharma, New Delhi

■ The Raja is undoubtedly the best bet for prime ministership among the Opposition leaders. However, it remains to be seen if the Opposition can at all win the forthcoming elections. V.P. Singh has the largest following in the country and should be able to swing the voters to his side. But, before that, he needs to announce the policies of his party.

Chandra Shekhar's tirade against the Raja at this stage is most unfortunate. His efforts to discredit V.P. Singh stem from his own personal ambitions. As for the controversial letter, I think it was perfectly logical

for V.P. Singh, then a Congressman and a minister in Indira Gandhi's cabinet, to brand JP a 'traitor'. It is obvious that V.P. Singh did this to gain the confidence of Mrs Gandhi. To make an issue of it today is unfortunate. What Chandra Shekhar needs to realise is that it is the likes of V.P. Singh who can defeat the Congress(I) at Allahabad.

Amit Mathur, Sindri (Bihar)

No, he can't...

■ The comparison between V.P. Singh and the tortoise is an insult to the image of the patient and compassionate tortoise. The Raja at best can be compared to a chameleon which changes its colour every now and then. Today, he has no concern for the sentiments of his party members, who had at one time made him a hero. He is so obsessed with the idea of exercising power that nothing else matters to him. The Raja in him has got the better of his mind. The per-

son who had at one time criticised Rajiv Gandhi for his dictatorial attitude is behaving in a worse manner with his colleagues. I fully agree with his statement which is a true self-assessment: "It would be a national disaster if I became the Prime Minister."

Balbir Singh Bhasin, Patna Sahib (Bihar)

■ M.L. Fotedar has best described V.P. Singh. "He is feudal in temperament as also in behaviour. He can neither lead nor face a challenge." The Raja is a person without a policy or a fixed set of principles. He shamelessly surrenders under pressure, changes his colours in a jiffy and indulges in the lowest forms of hypocrisy. V.P. Singh would do well to give up his dreams of becoming Prime Minister because nobody will vote for him.

R.K. Gulati, Siliguri (West Bengal)

■ The V.P. Singh of 1987 was vastly different from the V.P. Singh of today.



V. P. Singh: controversial leader

The one-time potential Prime Minister has been reduced to a spineless politician. And the Raja himself is to blame for this fortuitous metamorphosis. Indecisiveness, lack of political sagacity and an ideological vacuum are largely responsible for V.P. Singh's transformation from a messiah into a pariah. And under his leadership, the Janata Dal is in a shambles. However, there is precious little that the Raja can do to arrest the falling image of his party.

Anil Kumar Dwivedi, New Delhi

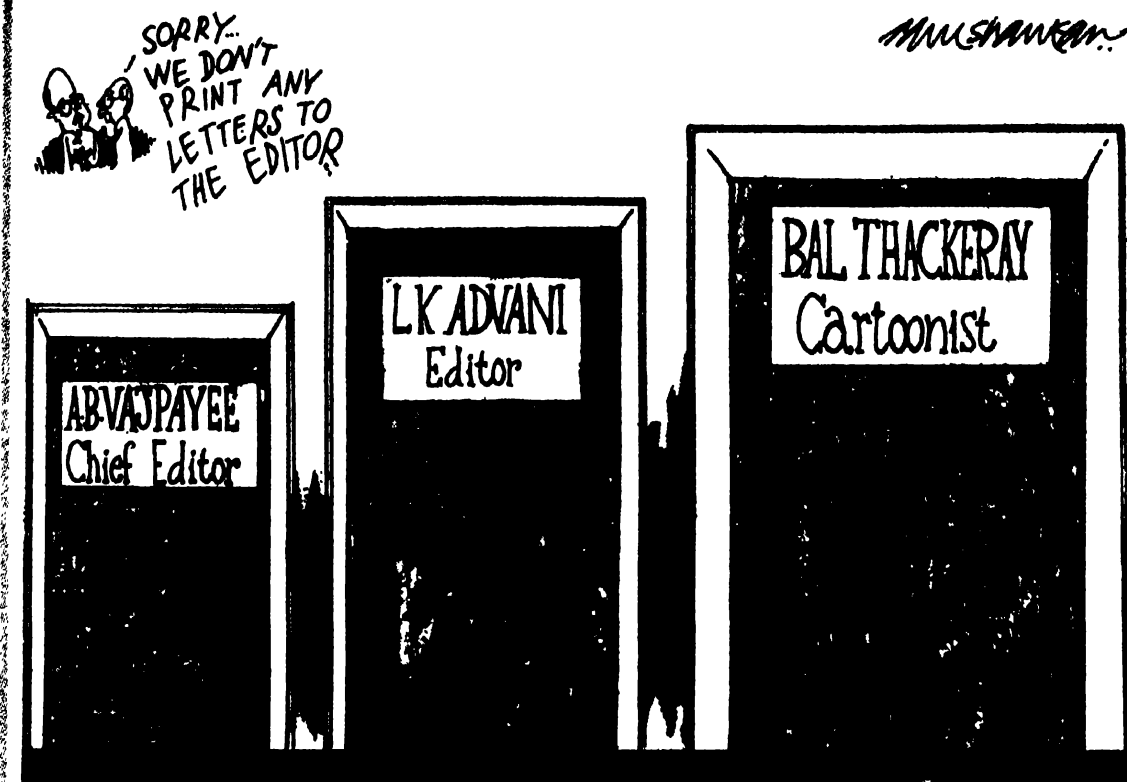
■ V.P. Singh appears to have several disadvantages vis-a-vis his arch rival Rajiv Gandhi. First, since integrity has no place in Indian politics, the Raja cannot hope to find favour with the electorate on this count. Second, even though his foes may not be formidable, his political allies are pygmies. Chandra Shekhar, Ajit Singh, Menaka Gandhi and Devi Lal are no good. Moreover, the Raja seems to have this habit of saying the right things at the wrong time. He is not even powerful in his accusations, no matter how true they may be. He makes a comment and then keeps silent for days together, as if waiting for the reactions of the public.

On the other hand, the cronies of Rajiv Gandhi are powerful and persuasive. V.P. Singh, no doubt, likes to conduct his election campaign on a powerful motorcycle, but his pace is like that of a tortoise. Rajiv, the cleverer hare, will certainly overtake him in the coming race.

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

■ V. P. Singh seems to have lost his chances of becoming Prime Minister. In fact, it would be a better idea to appoint Chandra Shekhar the president of the Janata Dal. Chandra Shekhar has all the qualities of leadership and in the long run would serve as the ideal replacement for Rajiv Gandhi's office.

K.V. Rajagopalan, Madras (Tamil Nadu)



RAM SHANKAR/THE TELEGRAPH

I go by the Gita. I accept things as they are.

JYOTI BASU, West Bengal chief minister

No one is safe in West Bengal.

KALPNATH RAI, minister of state for energy

It was difficult to trust my eyes as I read reports that your own Bharat ki khoj (the search for India) had convinced you that India can survive only as a Hindu Rashtra.

HIREN MUKHERJEE, veteran communist, in a letter to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Atal Behari Vajpayee

Through the Telugu Desam I have shown the country what a leader with a righteous and selfless mind could achieve in public life. And through Viswamitra, I want to show the country what a true democracy should be.

N.T. RAMA RAO, Andhra Pradesh chief minister, on his film Viswamitra

I do not want any Indian woman to carry a gun.

RAJIV GANDHI, Prime Minister, on Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. T. Rama Rao's plan to arm villagers

All utterances of Mr Gandhi do not merit comment.

V.P. SINGH, Janata Dal president, on Rajiv Gandhi's accusation that the Dal was drawing inspiration from foreign powers

Minus the state power, who is Mr Gandhi? A second grade pilot, an Avro pilot, I don't think he has the licence to fly.

GEORGE FERNANDES, Janata Dal leader

The saffron flag of the Sena will flutter atop the Mantralaya.

BAL THACKERAY, Shiv Sena chief, addressing the 23rd anniversary rally of his party

If Mr Hegde comes back to state politics, then who is going to work as swayamsevak to remove corruption in the country? It is a great loss to the nation.

H.D. DEVE GOWDA, Karnataka Janata Party leader, on Ramakrishna Hegde's announcement that he was considering a comeback to politics

Politics is not my profession.

J.B. PATNAIK, Orissa chief minister

The power situation here is better than in many other states.

SAROJ MUKHERJEE, West Bengal CPI(M)'s state secretary and Left Front chairman

Eleven years ago, Shyam Benegal was a big phenomenon for the pseudo-intellectuals. Now he's kind of passe.

SHYAM BENEGAL, filmmaker

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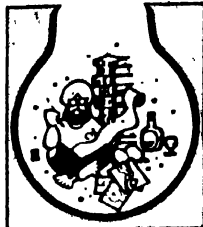
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The bathing pool



Come spring and my thoughts turn to swimming pools. By April it is warm enough to venture into an open-air pool heated by the sun. In May and June I choose the cooler waters of one that is covered. And, in both, I avoid hours when little boys and girls come in droves armed with nylon wings, snorkels, flippers and rubber balls and make a bloody nuisance of themselves. I also avoid early evenings, when paunchy civil servants on their way home from the secretariat, stop by to cool off and exchange office gossip standing waist deep in the water. Their sweat is more odiferous than their talk.

I have been a swimming buff all my life. I have swum in all the world's oceans, many of its seas and in bathing pools across the globe from New York and London to Yokohama; from Stockholm, Ankara, Kampala and down to the underworld in Auckland. I have quite a repertoire of swimming pool anecdotes and incidents collected from different countries.

It started off in Lahore where I was in college. I was among the few who swam all round the year braving the icy water in the winter months. An episode which stays in my mind is about a wrestler and a very hairy Sardarji. Both were avid swimmers. The Sardarji was in the habit of using anyone's soap at the shower without ever asking its owner. One day the wrestler, a Muslim, brought a hair removing (*baal uraney vaala*) cake of soap. As was his habit, the Sardarji lathered himself lavishly and rubbed the suds into his beard and hairy torso. The wrestler made a quick get-away. When the results of the operation came off in chunks in his hands, the Sardarji's ire knew no bounds. He did the rounds of all the hostels with a *kirpan* in his hand and swore he would kill the wrestler. The wrestler discreetly asked for permission to migrate. He left Government College and joined Islamia where he felt safer.

The first thing I did when I arrived in England to study for the Bar was to join the YMCA which had a heated swimming pool. It was after I had paid my subscription, and gone for my first swim, that I was sternly told by the

instructor that no kind of swimming suits or bathing trunks were allowed in the pool: you had to be stark naked. This was apparently a precaution against people with venereal disease using the pool. Like all Indians I was too embarrassed to expose myself. My subscription went to waste. Thereafter, most of my swimming was done during summer months in lakes and rivers of England.

It was at Izmir (Turkey) that I had the most memorable bathing pool experience. The hotel had an elevated pool with walls made of plate glass through which you could see the swimmers in the water. A young couple were having a lot of fun chasing each other round the pool, diving in and out. Then the girl went up on the diving board. Her boyfriend followed her and threatened to push her off. She hesitated a while before poising for a dive. The boy grabbed the top half of her bikini just as she leapt off the board. The bikini snapped and the girl plunged in topless. A sight for the Gods! The poor girl came out with her arms covering her shapely bosom and a torrent of abuse in Turkish for her boyfriend, who was sheepishly holding a towel for her to cover her nakedness.

Water has strange fascination for some people. Bernard Shaw was one of them. He wrote of an incident when



Swimming is rated much the best of all exercises; it tones up every muscle of the body evenly without overstraining the arms or legs as happens in games like tennis, badminton, hockey, soccer or in jogging

some boys took a bet over giving the bearded patriarch a ducking. One of them accepted the wager and swam stealthily towards the playwright who was swimming at the other end of the pool. As the boy approached from behind, Shaw suddenly turned round to face him. The boy was overcome with embarrassment. Shaw asked him what he was up to. The boy told him about the bet. "That's all right," said Shaw, "let me take a deep breath, then you can give me a ducking and win your bet."

Byron and Shelley could also never resist water. While Byron was a powerful swimmer, Shelley never learnt to swim. They often went out together boating. More than once their boat upturned and Byron had to rescue Shelley. Ultimately, Shelley died of drowning.

Swimming is rated much the best of all exercises; it exercises every muscle of the body evenly without overstraining the arms or legs as happens in games like tennis, badminton, hockey, soccer or in jogging. The one disadvantage it has is that it exposes you to diseases that other people in the pool suffer from. You really have to relax your views on hygiene when you enter a club or a hotel swimming pool. Water flows in and out of swimmers' mouths, nostrils and other orifices to pass into yours. It can be worse when there are little children in the same pool. It is this that gave currency to the oft quoted joke: "Spell psychology" someone asks you. You spell it. He comes out with the punch line—"Correct! P silent as in swimming."

GHALIB'S PRAYER

It is said of the poet Ghalib that once when he was in dire straits, with no money to buy provisions for the home, his wife advised him to go to the mosque and pray to Allah for help. Ghalib did as he was told. At the entrance to the mosque, he ran into one of his drinking companions who persuaded him to come along to the tavern. He returned home very late. When his wife asked him why he was so late, he replied, "Allah answered my prayer at the door step of the mosque. So I went to the *maikhana* to give him thanks."

(Contributed by B. S. Kalra, Delhi)

The seats of power

The BJP's intransigence may destroy the possibility of an electoral adjustment with the Janata Dal

If political stubbornness is an indication of strength, then the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) must be supreme. Of late, it has become aggressive in its dealings with the Opposition. And its tough, intransigent posture is threatening the prospect of a seat adjustment agreement with the Janata Dal.

If the deliberations at the recently held meeting of the BJP national executive at Palampur are any indication, the party does not seem very enthusiastic about arriving at a formula for seat adjustments with the Janata Dal. In those states where it is strong, the BJP wants the performance in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections as the basis for seat sharing. But in others, it demands that "ground realities" be taken into account since past performance alone cannot form the basis for negotiations. To buttress this argument, it has repeatedly asserted that it can no longer be described as a primarily urban party as it has grown tremendously in the rural areas over the past four and a half years. And therefore, its enhanced strength should be kept in mind when deciding on seat adjustments.

No wonder then that the preliminary round of discussions between the representatives of the two parties at Surajkund (led by the Dal's parliamentary board chairman Devi Lal and former BJP president Atal Behari Vajpayee) did not get anywhere. The talks focused on arriving at seat adjustments in Delhi,



Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Since the BJP is strong in both Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, it was in no mood to accommodate the Janata Dal. As for Uttar Pradesh, it demanded a much larger share of seats than it deserves.

In his address to the national executive, BJP president L.K. Advani made it clear that his party was interested in Opposition unity only if it could reap a rich electoral harvest. He exhorted partymen to work towards achieving a two-fold objective: "Oust the Rajiv government and acquire a sizeable presence for the BJP in the 1990 Lok Sabha so that whether in power, or outside, the party can play the role of a stabilising nucleus in Indian politics." He also said that he would like his party to proceed with the seat adjustment talks "warily" and with "cautious optimism". Exuding a confidence that was perhaps misplaced, he declared: "Let us resolve to achieve these objectives—if other Opposition friends cooperate, with them; if they do not, without them; and if they oppose, in spite of them."

Given this kind of attitude, it is not surprising that the BJP has chosen—despite the Janata Dal's reservations—to ally with the Shiv Sena in Maharash-

tra. As in Maharashtra, its attitude elsewhere is: take it or leave it. It does not seem unduly worried at the prospect of Opposition votes being divided. The argument of veteran ideologue K.R. Malkani—that triangular contests have traditionally favoured the BJP—seems to be winning more and more adherents.

Triangular contests in Maharashtra are now a certainty given the Janata Dal's announcement that it will have no truck with the BJP in the state because of its decision to ally with the Shiv Sena. The BJP knew that the Dal would not change its stand as V.P. Singh had made it clear on many occasions that his party could not go along with a BJP-Shiv Sena combination. In view of this, the BJP's decision at Palampur to ally with the Shiv Sena was taken with the knowledge that it would scotch any chance of an overall seat adjustment. Pramod Mahajan, a young and influential BJP leader from Maharashtra, says that the state will perhaps be the only one where talks between the BJP and the Dal will break down, not because of a disagreement over seat sharing but on a matter of policy.

Mahajan thinks that the Dal will be wiped out if it fights the elections



▲ THE JANATA DAL'S DELHI OFFICE

The attitude of the BJP national executive (left) seems to indicate that the party is not very enthusiastic about arriving at a formula for seat adjustments with the Janata Dal (above)

◆ THE BJP'S PALAMPUR MEET

without the BJP. "Even Madhu Dandavate will not be able to save his seat. In all probability, this will be his last Lok Sabha election," he says. By his reckoning, the Janata Dal does not count for much in Maharashtra and enjoys influence only in a few pockets. However, he is not able to explain why the BJP offered as many as 17 seats (out of a total of 48) to the Dal.

BJP sources say that an alliance with the Shiv Sena is attractive because it does not want to play a national role. Thus, it is likely to leave most of the Maharashtra Lok Sabha seats to the BJP. The Sena, the theory goes, will be happy if it is allowed to contest the Assembly elections in a big way. It is believed that Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray hopes to become the chief minister of the state.

Chances of a BJP-Dal alliance in states where the former is strong appear bleak. The BJP thinks it is in a position to form governments in Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and win Delhi. In Maharashtra and Gujarat, it describes itself as the "dominant party". Even in states such as UP and Bihar, it considers itself as

strong as the Dal. No wonder then that it has demanded at least 35 seats (out of a total of 85) in the politically crucial state of Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP realises that it will be difficult for the Dal to meet such demands. So it is preparing for the general election on the assumption that it may have to go it alone. Says Kalraj Mishra, general secretary of the BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit: "Conflicting statements issued by a

The BJP does not seem unduly worried at the prospect of Opposition votes being divided. That is probably why it has chosen to ally with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, despite the Janata Dal's reservations

host of Janata Dal leaders give the impression that it will not be very easy to come to an agreement on seat sharing in UP. So, we are going ahead with our own preparations. The way the talks are being conducted does not arouse hopes. The Janata Dal leaders want to take the 1984 performance as the basis without accounting for our growth in the intervening period."

Like other BJP leaders, Mishra asserts that the "ground realities" have changed and that the party has established a firm rural base. "We staged a mammoth *kisan* rally on 6 March, 1987, in Lucknow, which was attended by people from all areas of the state. We undertook *padayatras* in rural areas in January 1988 and courted arrest—nearly 1,25,000 BJP workers and supporters were arrested. This shows that we are a big force in the rural areas," he says.

Of late, the BJP has also demonstrated its strength in the elections to the local bodies in UP. It won the mayoral elections in Agra and Bareilly. In Meerut, the BJP-supported candidate was elected as the chief of the municipal corporation. In Banaras and Gorakhpur, the BJP has the second largest presence in the municipal corporations. Mishra

points out that such considerations should not be ignored while discussing how many seats the BJP should be given. He thinks the Dal's offer of seven Lok Sabha seats in UP—arrived at on the basis of the last election—is too low. Mishra indicates that his party may scale down its demand of 35 seats to 30, but says it will not settle for less.

The BJP believes that seat sharing in states where it is strong will only help the Congress(I). It thinks that Janata Dal candidates cannot win in these states. This could be why the Dal's Madhya Pradesh state president, V.C. Shukla's seat adjustment formula met with a negative response. Shukla had proposed that out of a total of 40 seats, the BJP be given 17.

Madhya Pradesh BJP president and former chief minister, Sunderlal Patwa, ridicules this proposal. Referring to the rampant factionalism in the MP Janata Dal, he wonders whether Shukla has the authority to decide on such matters. Says Patwa: "We would like the Janata Dal to tell us where they are stronger than us (in MP). If they convince us, we are willing to leave those seats for them." He points out that in the last election, the BJP was second in 37 constituencies, the Janata Party in two and the CPI in one. The unspoken suggestion being that the Janata Dal should get only two or three seats in Madhya Pradesh. "Even if no understanding is reached between the BJP and the Dal, we are not really bothered as we are confident that we can defeat the Congress(I) on the basis of our own strength," he says.

The BJP is taking care to ensure that 1984—when negotiations with Opposition parties broke down at the last minute—does not repeat itself again. This time, it is not leaving anything to chance. Lists of candidates have been finalised for those seats it thinks it can win or provide a fight. State units have already sent their lists to the national leadership.

Like Patwa, the Himachal Pradesh BJP president and former chief minister, Shanta Kumar, believes that the only party which matters in his state, apart from his own, is the Congress(I). "We can contest and win all the four Lok Sabha seats (in HP). Still, we are not averse to the idea of seat adjustments with the Janata Dal, even though we know that there is no chance of a third force emerging here," he says. Shanta Kumar reels off statistics to demonstrate how the BJP is stronger than the Dal in his state. He points out that in the 1982 Assembly elections, the BJP won 29 seats, polling 35 per cent of the vote, and in 1985, secured 30 per cent. On the



V.P. SINGH



CHANDRA SHEKHAR

other hand, in 1985, the Janata Party and the Lok Dal together polled only two per cent of the vote. "This shows who is strong where," he says.

In Rajasthan, BJP leaders are irked by Devi Lal, who has projected the Dal's Nathuram Mirdha as the future chief minister of the state. Out of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan, the BJP is

prepared to allow the Dal no more than five. In 1984, the BJP came second in 15 of the 25 constituencies. However, it is staking a claim even on such seats as Banswara, where the Lok Dal candidate polled 1,000 votes more than the BJP's in the last election. The BJP's argument for this is familiar: it is stronger in the constituency than it was before.

The BJP president, L.K. Advani, makes it clear that his party is interested in Opposition unity only if it can reap a rich electoral harvest





AJIT SINGH

Bihar presents a ticklish problem. According to the BJP's Bihar state president, Kailashpati Mishra, his party will have no truck with either the communists or the Jharkhand leaders. Mishra lays down a condition for entering into seat adjustments with the Janata Dal. He says that if the Dal allies with the CPI, then no understanding will be



DEVI LAL

The Dal's parliamentary board chairman, Devi Lal, is strongly in favour of having seat adjustments with the BJP, and Chandra Shekhar is not averse to the idea. Though secretary general Ajit Singh is dead against aligning with the BJP, party president V.P. Singh may be forced to accept the majority opinion

possible with it. Of the total 54 seats, he wants at least 27 for his party—not much in his view as he thinks the BJP is in a position to fight 35 seats on its own.

Such problems apart, the BJP's aggressive communal stance is a worry for the Dal. The fear is that an alliance with the BJP may lose the Dal

both the minority vote and that of the secular Hindus. Both the CPI(M) and the CPI have adopted this line of argument to pressure the Dal into severing its links with the BJP.

There are other problems in the way of a BJP-Dal alliance. Dal secretary general Ajit Singh is said to be dead against it. The reason is that he fears the loss of the Muslim vote his father, the late Chaudhary Charan Singh, cultivated in western UP. Moreover, being a secularist, Ajit Singh finds himself ill at ease in the company of the BJP.

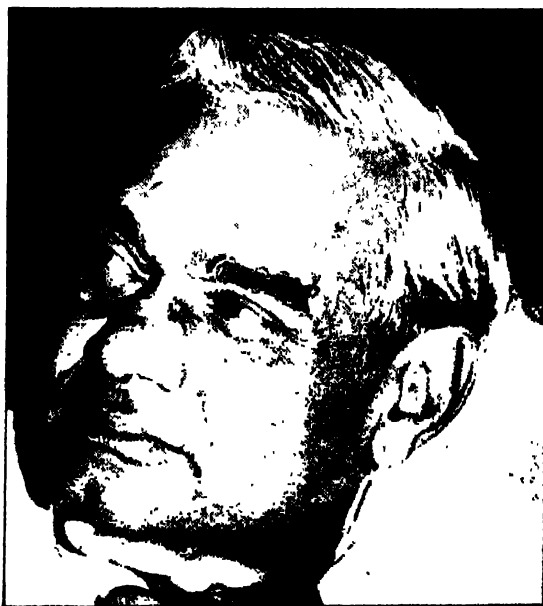
Ajit Singh's is the minority view though. It is well known that Devi Lal is a strong proponent of having a poll pact with the BJP. Chandra Shekhar is not averse to the idea. And now that party president V.P. Singh has patched up his differences with Chandra Shekhar, he will be under pressure from both Lal and Shekhar to reach an understanding with the BJP. However, none of them will be ready to concede the unrealistic demands of the BJP.

Then, there is a basic conflict in the approaches of the Janata Dal and the National Front on the one hand and the BJP on the other. While the National Front wants the Minority Commission to be vested with statutory powers, the BJP demands that it be replaced by what it calls a 'human rights commission'. There are differences of opinion also over Article 370 of the Constitution (which accords special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir) and the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi issue.

Unmindful of the Janata Dal's criticism, the BJP seems to be going ahead with plans to make the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi controversy an election issue. Although Atal Behari Vajpayee denies that his party has any such intention, L.K. Advani says that if this issue is raised during the election campaign, he will reply by exposing the "pseudo-secularism" of the Congress(I) and other Opposition parties. When asked whether the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's decision to build a temple on the site where the Babri Masjid stands will not vitiate the election campaign, Advani avoids the question. It is a well-known fact that BJP workers are a part of the plan to build the temple. By adopting a resolution demanding that the Masjid be handed over to the Hindus, the BJP has made its stand clear.

The two communist parties have made it obvious that they may not cooperate with the Janata Dal if the negotiations with the BJP continue. The Dal has to take a decision quickly. If it prevaricates any longer, it may lose the support of both the left and the right.

Kuldeep Kumar/Palampur



It is likely that the BJP will make the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi controversy an election issue. However, A.B. Vajpayee denies that the party has any such intention

The Siachen fiasco

India rejects Pakistan's claim that the glacier dispute has been resolved

It is a vast, barren, uninhabited stretch of icy territory but for over three decades India and Pakistan have fought to gain control of the disputed Siachen glacier. Endless rounds of talks at various levels have failed to solve the knotty problem and even a change of leadership in Pakistan did not raise much hope of a breakthrough in India's diplomatic circles. Thus when the defence secretaries of the two countries met in Islamabad recently, there was hardly any optimism in the two camps.

However, the vocal foreign secretary of Pakistan, Humayun Khan, sprang the first surprise. At the end of the four-day talks, Khan told a crowded press conference that an agreement had been reached between the two countries over the Siachen issue. The foreign secretary told dumbfounded journalists that India and Pakistan had agreed to withdraw their troops to the position they occupied before 1972, the year the historic Shimla agreement was signed. Khan, of course, added that neither country knew where exactly its troops were stationed before 1972!

Expectedly, Humayun Khan's assertion was greeted with surprise in New Delhi's political and diplomatic circles. For, the agreement which the Pakistan foreign secretary was talking of could only be reached at the ministerial level. Besides, many political observers were surprised that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi could have taken such a weird decision, which amounted to a "sell-out" to Pakistan, in an election year.

Pakistan's arbitrary claim would normally have elicited a strong protest from the Indian foreign office in New Delhi. But in keeping with the spirit of understanding that has marked Indo-Pak relations ever since Benazir Bhutto took over in Pakistan, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) instructed the ministry of external affairs (MEA) to play down the fiasco. Clarifying India's position, a somewhat embarrassed spokesman of the MEA told the press that there had been "no agreement or disagreement" during the Siachen talks. Later, the spokesman told SUNDAY: "The Indian government did not want to create a false sense of euphoria. Though some progress has been made, it is not as if



the Siachen package is ready with the ribbons and tinsel tied on it. There is still a lot to be done."

In fact, many defence observers too feel that it would take another couple of years before the Siachen issue is sorted out. However, both India and Pakistan are making honest efforts to arrive at a solution because the stakes for both the countries in the icy territory are very high. It is estimated that since 1986, when the first major shoot-out occurred on the peaks of the glacier, India has shelled out over Rs 300 crores to man the inhospitable terrain round the year. And, during this period, India suffered 1,000 casualties.



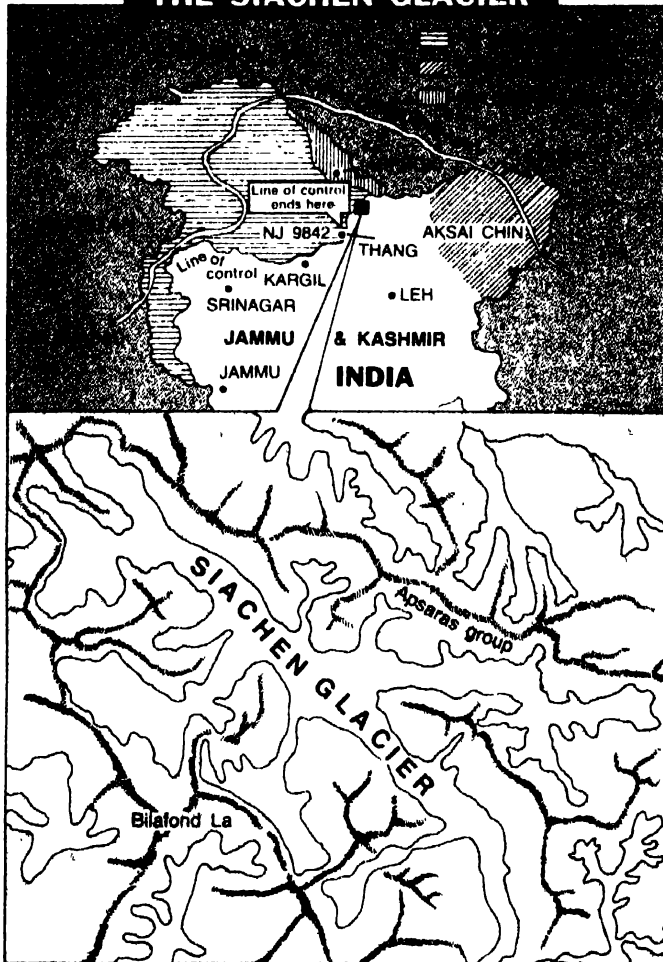
Though Pakistan has not spent as much as India in Siachen, it has always taken an active interest in the militarisation of the disputed glacier. Only this year, Pakistan acquired costly high altitude aircraft and equipment worth \$60 million. "There are many hurdles which have to be crossed before either side can afford to pull out their troops to the pre-1972 position," said Shreedhar Rao of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA).

At this point, the most difficult hurdle is the identification of the troops positions when the Shimla agreement was signed. The Shimla document has suddenly acquired a new dimension since it was in 1972

Indian troops in Siachen; (left inset) Humayun Khan: disputed claim



THE SIACHEN GLACIER



MAP BY SANTOSH DUTIA

that the two countries had first decided to sort out the Siachen issue bilaterally, without any interference from a third country or organisation. More important, the treaty will serve as the basis for demarcating the point beyond which troops of either side will not be stationed. Today, the troops of both the countries are manning posts as high as 19,000 feet whereas in 1972,

India and Pakistan are making honest efforts to solve the Siachen problem because the stakes for both the countries in the icy territory are very high. But it will take several years before the issue is sorted out

they did not go beyond 11,000 feet.

Both India and Pakistan blame each other for violating the terms of the 1972 treaty. The Indian version is that it was Pakistan which provoked India by sending mountaineering expeditions to Siachen in 1976-77. India retaliated by sponsoring an expedition of the Indian Mountaineering Federation (IMF) around 1978-79. Pakistan protested but matters came to a head in 1983 when Pak troops fired on the members of an expedition team. From then, Indian and Pakistani troops have often had skirmishes.

The first peace initiative came from India around March this year when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi ordered that a special task force consisting of members from the ministry of defence and the Survey of India be set up to supervise the demarcation of territory. Pakistan responded by undertaking a similar exercise. However, the sensitive task will take several months to be complete. But, a final solution can be arrived at only if both the countries

display maturity and understanding.

For India, there is a greater impediment. Though New Delhi denies it, any settlement of the Siachen issue will affect our relations with China. If India strikes a deal with Pakistan, China could justifiably claim that the settlement should be extended to cover the Sino-Indian border dispute in the region as well. Just as the Pakistani troops have been inching their way towards Indian posts in Siachen, the Chinese too have been holding regular high-altitude exercises along the Karakoram range. India has stationed ten mountain divisions along the Sino-Indian border and it enjoys a marginal advantage over the Chinese in the area.

Though India has been desperately trying to play down China's stake in Siachen, Beijing has been monitoring the talks between India and Pakistan over the glacier. Pakistan, on its part, too must be keeping the Chinese informed about the developments. It is perhaps not just coincidental that immediately after the recent parleys, Humayan Khan caught the next flight to Beijing.

Ritu Sarki/New Delhi

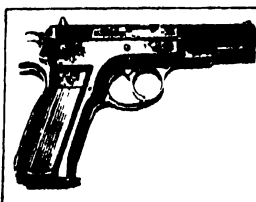
Playing with pistols

Who scuttled the Czech deal—Arun Nehru or Buta Singh?

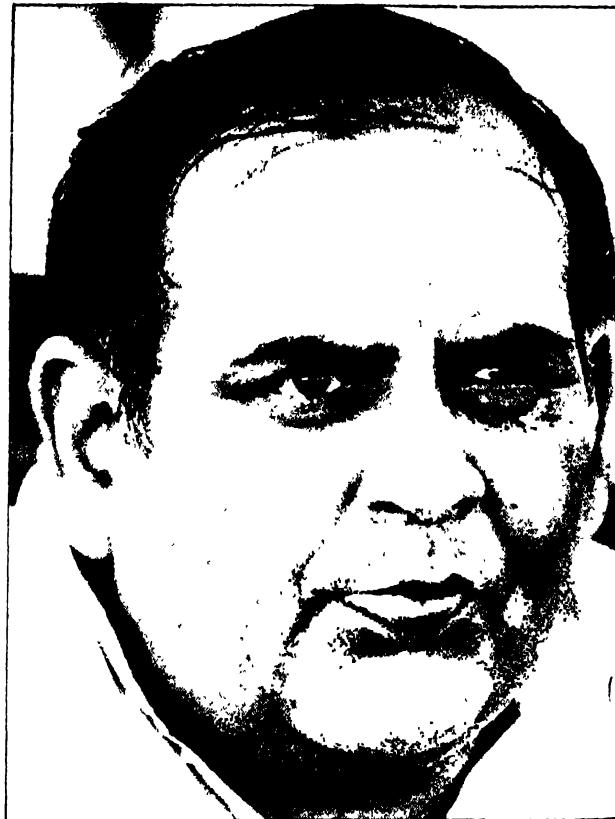
For a deal that never was, the Czech pistol contract attracts far too much curiosity. Why was the contract cancelled, and why were over 10,000 pistols returned even after they were paid for? Besides, how serious is the ministry of home affairs (MHA) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) about pursuing the case to its logical end?

Home minister Buta Singh may have tried to politicise the issue and put the blame on former internal security minister Arun Nehru to win Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's support for the campaign against the Czech pistol. But Buta Singh has more to answer for the mess than anyone else. For, it was at his insistence that the pistols were subjected to the most questionable tests, hastily declared "sub-standard", and sent back. If the home minister believed the country was being cheated, why didn't he give the pistol a fair trial before summarily rejecting it? In the end, nobody was happier than arms dealer A.K. Jajodia, who told the Czechs they wouldn't get anywhere without his help. Did the wishes of an arms dealer take precedence over national necessity?

The country's security set-up is in dire need of the 9 mm pistol. With the Czech deal torpedoed, some 90,000 policemen have to go on duty unarmed. In 1986, an MHA estimate put the requirement of all state police forces and central police organisations at 55,000 pistols. This figure has now shot up to a lakh. Before long, offers will again be invited and reprocessed. Says a home ministry official: "Whatever we buy has to be comparable to the standard weapons in use all over the world and satisfactory in performance." The process of buying a new pistol has not yet begun—because the 1986 precedent is still fresh in people's minds. In 1985, India bought 20,000 Sturm-Ruger revolvers from an American manufacturer. A good number of these are useless and are lying in the Border Security Force (BSF) armoury because their barrels have no rifling (an essential part of any weapon which puts the bullet into a spin). Says the MHA official: "At least, now we know what we do not want."



As minister in charge of internal security, Arun Nehru took two major decisions regarding the pistol deal. But can he be faulted for complying with the finance ministry's orders?



The Czech pistol deal must have been one of the most controversial in the history of independent India. In the space of a little over a year, the agreement was negotiated, signed, five consignments of pistols received and kept in the Delhi Police armoury at Kingsway Camp, and then rejected and sent back. At the end of 1985, the MHA set up a weaponry committee headed by S.D. Pandey, the director general of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which recommended the purchase of pistols instead of revolvers. Revolvers are single action weapons, and pistols are automatic. (Earlier, revolvers were preferred because pistols were not accurate, but with the improvement in standards, pistols were found to be more useful. A pistol could hold 14-18 cartridges against a revolver's six.)

The search for a suitable pistol began soon after. Arms agents lobbied in New Delhi. The army was asked for its opinion. It recommended that the pistols

should be bought from FM Browning. (A.K. Jajodia of William Jacks was the Browning agent.) There seemed nothing wrong with the suggestion, except that the army itself had bought the Beretta in 1982-83. Nonetheless, Browning's UK manufacturer was contacted and asked to bring down the price from \$398 a piece. They declined, saying they were confident of bagging the contract at that price. In early 1986, the former DG of Punjab Police, J. F. Ribeiro, suggested that more offers should be invited.

On 10 April, 1986, the finance ministry wrote a DO letter to the MHA saying that if any purchases are to be made from the General Currency Area (GCA), the request for foreign exchange should be accompanied by a statement explaining the reasons why offers from the Rupee Payment Area (RPA) could not be accepted. The MHA interpreted the letter to mean that if an RPA offer was found technically suitable, it shouldn't go in for anything else. The tender was

floated and the last date for offers was 15 June, 1986. Seven valid offers were received:

- FM Browning (UK)—\$368;
- Smith & Wesson Model 669 (US)—\$334.75;
- Smith & Wesson Model 459 (US)—\$323.75;
- Smith & Wesson Model 469 (US)—\$304.75;

search and Development (BPR&D), and additional secretary, MHA.

The first decision was taken to comply with the finance ministry's letter. The second, because Nehru did not want the evaluation committee to be dominated by one person. But the fact that the decision to favour the RPA offer—that is, the Czech pistol, which

saving for India.

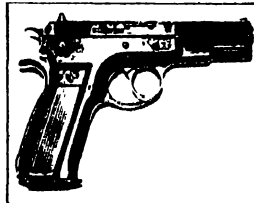
As for the quality of the weapon, the MHA evaluation committee which examined the pistol on 18 June, 1986, found fault with it on two counts. First, the pistol didn't have a lanyard ring (which would enable it to be hooked on to a lanyard) and, second, it fired even when the magazine was taken out. These complaints were referred to the Czechs. They promised to provide lanyard rings at no extra cost. As for pistol's ability to fire a round even when the magazine was taken out, the Czechs argued that this was an added advantage and not a drawback. It enables the user to fire a shot even while changing the magazine. (Normally, a pistol locks when the magazine is taken out, for safety.) The evaluation committee agreed.

In May, 1986, Arun Nehru suffered a heart attack and was hospitalised in Srinagar. His influence too was on the wane. Jajodia utilised this opportunity and in July he made a bid to block the Czech deal. He sent a letter to the expenditure secretary, listing seven defects of the CZ-75 pistol. The expenditure secretary sought an explanation from the MHA and was satisfied with the home ministry's arguments. The Czechs wanted the deal finalised by 15 August, 1986, to make the Indian order conform to their production schedule, but India sought two extensions. The contract was to be signed on 31 August, 1986. But a day earlier, the joint secretary (police) in the MHA met the additional secretary (MHA), B.P. Singhal, and told him that it was Buta Singh's wish that he shouldn't sign the contract. Jain told Singhal that a group of "five MPs" had met the home minister and made three complaints. They were:

- Singhal persuaded the Czechs to cancel the agency of an individual and grant it to his brother, who is in computer business in Delhi;
- The army was deliberately kept out of the evaluation;
- The pistol was not selected on merit.

Singhal protested. He was hurt that Buta Singh conveyed the message to him through a junior officer. He handed over the Czech pistol file to Jain and told him to give it to the home minister so that he could see for himself if the pistol was chosen on its merits or not. Singhal also requested Jain to obtain the complaint against him from the MPs in writing and swore that neither his brother nor any of his relatives ever had any business dealings with the Czechs. Jain took away the file from Singhal.

On 3 September, 1986, Jain returned



Buta Singh has more to answer for the mess than anyone else. It was at his insistence that the Czech pistols were subjected to the most questionable tests, declared "sub-standard" and sent back

- Beretta (Italy)—\$300;
- Merkuria CZ-75 (Czechoslovakia)—\$240;
- Vincenzo (Austria)—\$245.

Arun Nehru, the then minister of state in the MHA in charge of internal security, was anxious that the pistol purchases be finalised soon. But he also cautioned the officials against taking the army's word for gospel truth. Buta Singh, who had become home minister by now, was not involved at this stage. On 22 May, 1986, Nehru called a meeting of the DG (BSF), the DG (CRPF), the additional secretary (MHA) and joint secretary (police), MHA. Two major decisions were taken. The cheapest RPA offer would be evaluated and if found suitable, the pistols should be bought. Moreover, the committee set up to evaluate the weapon, originally consisting of the DG (CRPF), S.D. Pandey, and a number of DIGs, was upgraded and enlarged to include the DG (BSF), the DG, Bureau of Police Re-

was the only RPA offer to be received (the Russian offer came only after the last date had lapsed)—was taken 24 days before the last date for receiving offers raised the CBI's suspicions. And this is the most "damning" piece of information the CBI has against Nehru. But can Nehru be faulted for taking a decision to comply with a finance ministry DO?

By now, home minister Buta Singh started displaying interest in the deal. An MHA official recalls Buta Singh telling Arun Nehru to hear out Jajodia before taking a final decision. But the MHA officials decided to buy the CZ-75 pistols. The CZ-75 was originally offered at Rs 3013.18 a piece on 16 April, 1986. By 29 July, the rupee had been devalued considerably and the offer stood at Rs 3,262. But the manufacturers agreed to a flat rate of Rs 3,438—irrespective of the devaluation of the rupee—when the contract was finally signed on 3 September, 1986. This meant a substantial



A policeman takes aim: acute shortage of pistols

the file to Singhal with the message that the home minister had cleared the deal. The contract was signed. But Singhal still felt deeply outraged. He complained to the home secretary, C.G. Somiah, who told him that rival parties in arms deals usually make such allegations. But Singhal was not to be comforted. On 9 September, 1986, he shot off a note to the home secretary defending himself. (Singhal later found that the complaints were not made by any MP but by A.K. Jajodia himself!) What is more, Singhal was able to trace A.K. Jajodia's telex message to Merkuria, the manufacturers of the Czech pistol, in which the arms dealer claimed to have lobbied for the CZ-75 with the MHA since 1982, and demanded the right to act as a middleman in the deal and claim a commission.

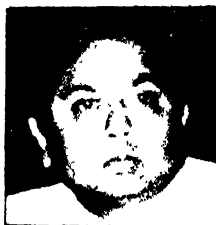
Arun Nehru by now had ceased to be a powerful figure. Buta Singh refused to meet Singhal, who was anxious to explain the details of the episode. In desperation, Singhal wrote a note to Buta Singh on 16 October, 1986, and also sent a copy of it to Arun Nehru, who was still the minister in charge of internal security. Both the ministers returned the notes without appending any remarks.

Between November 1986 and July 1987, as consignments of pistols arrived, a series of tests were conducted on them. The results, to say the least, were astonishing. One test contradicted the other. In some cases, the Czech experts even suspected that the pistols had been tampered with. Under the terms of the contract, before the arrival of the first consignment, four pistols were to be sent along with one pilot sample. The four were to be tested, and one master sample was to be kept in India, and one in Czechoslovakia, for

future reference. These tests were carried out by an officer from the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), R.S. Sahaye, on 17 December.

Sahaye fired 500-600 rounds from each of the four pistols. Two of them fired flawlessly. The third also fired without difficulty except that the trigger pin was unseated a little. The Czech experts complained that they found the seals of the pistols broken before they arrived. It was possible that they were tampered with. The Czechs even wrote a formal note to this effect. But the BPR&D filed a report on 26 December condemning the weapon in the most strident terms.

Singhal raised several questions about the validity of the BPR&D tests. When the matter came up before home secretary Somiah, he was reluc-



A.K. Jajodia

After Arun Nehru fell from grace, arms dealer A.K. Jajodia tried his best to block the pistol deal. He even sent a letter to the government listing the defects of the Czech weapon

tant to take a decision on his own and set up a committee to examine the test report. The DG (BSF), M.C. Mishra, DG (CRP), S.D. Pandey, DG (BPR&D), T.A. Subramaniam, the former DG (BPR&D), S.K. Mallick, and Singhal were on the board. The committee rejected the BPR&D test report. However, it agreed that three to five per cent of the pistols of each consignment should be test-fired. A committee was set up to conduct these tests with the DIG (NSG), N.S. Yadav, as its chairman. The BPR&D (which was considered biased) was conspicuously kept out.

Yadav's job was to test the two pistols which were found defective by the BPR&D and sample the three consignments which had already arrived. He tested nine pistols in all. Strangely, the two which the BPR&D found defective fired flawlessly. But Yadav came up with a new discovery: he said that 30 per cent of the pistols which had arrived needed reaming. This meant the weapons had problems accommodating Indian cartridges because the socket where the cartridges are supposed to fit in was of irregular width. Experts say this could be because the pistols are made in a lathe, and the first 30 per cent of the product which comes out of the lathe would always need reaming. The pistols, however, fired. Five malfunctions were reported against a permitted 13. But Yadav wrote an adverse report, arguing that reaming would reduce the life of the pistols.

Singhal maintained that a weapon should be judged on the basis of facts, not feelings. If the expert committee felt that reaming would affect the life of the pistols, it should have fired the requisite 15,000 rounds (which is as much as a pistol can fire) from a reamed weapon to find out the truth. But on 30 January, 1987, Singhal found himself relieved from the charge of additional secretary in the MHA.

In the haste to return the pistols, no bank guarantee was taken. For several months, the pistols (worth Rs three crores) and the money India had paid for them were lying with the Czechs. The contract was irrevocable, but it was both the goodwill of the Czechs and devaluation of the rupee (owing to which the Czechs stood to lose heavily) that made the cancellation of the deal a smooth affair. Had the Czechs gone through with the contract, the total loss to them would have been Rs 5.25 crores by 1989. Whoever didn't want India to buy the pistols—calling them "obsolete" and "substandard"—actually helped the Czechs, but not necessarily India.

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

The politics of pull-out

India and Sri Lanka lock horns over the continuing presence of the IPKF

It went in as a small and neutral force to supervise the voluntary surrender of arms by Tamil militants. Within months, it had become transformed into a full-fledged unit whose objective was to free Sri Lanka from the clutches of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Today, two years after the first Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) soldier landed on the island, it is accused of being a force of occupation.

The decision to send the IPKF to Sri Lanka is threatening to become the biggest and most embarrassing foreign policy misadventure of the Rajiv Gandhi government. When President R. Premadasa declared, during a public speech on 1 June, that he wanted the IPKF to leave by 29 July, it is possible that New Delhi believed he was not altogether serious. Government spokesmen began by saying that India had received no formal request to this effect and, when Colombo reiterated the demand, claimed that logistics would not permit a pull-out by the set deadline.

The government's position on Premadasa's request was made absolutely clear only on 14 June, when Rajiv Gandhi said at Bangalore that the pull-out would depend on the satisfactory implementation of the terms of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord. He categorically said that the troops would leave only after adequate powers were devolved on the provincial council in the Tamil-dominated North-Eastern Sri Lanka. He argued that the Tamils would be able to look after their own security only after they were delegated enough powers and that it was India's responsibility under the accord "to protect the property and lives of the Tamils".

Rajiv's arguments for keeping the IPKF on are questionable. For one, the IPKF's role under the accord was not to protect Tamil life (or, for that matter, forcibly disarm the LTTE); on the other hand, it was supposed to oversee the voluntary surrender of arms (a job that was expected to be over within 72 hours of the accord coming into force).

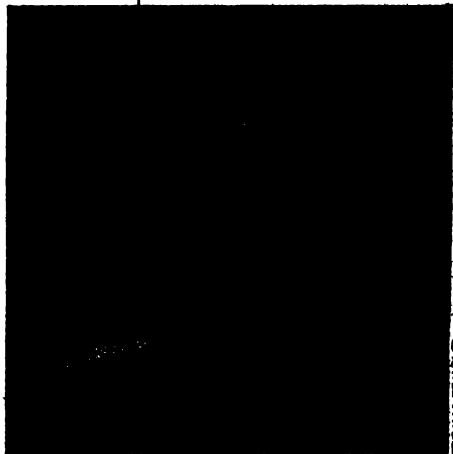
Moreover, under the accord, the IPKF's presence has nothing to do with the devolution of powers; the latter is one of the many steps that the Sri Lankan government is obliged to take in order to fulfil the agreement.

If India believed that the adoption of a hard line would call Premadasa's bluff, it was mistaken. The Sri Lankan government's response to Rajiv's remarks was scathing. A statement released by the Sri Lankan foreign ministry, while refer-

of Sri Lanka." Two days later, reports citing authoritative sources claimed that Colombo was planning to raise the issue of the IPKF's presence in the United Nations and the International Court of Justice.

With both sides having adopted such divergent positions, Indo-Sri Lankan relations appear headed for a major crisis. At the moment, it appears that Premadasa has the upper hand. India's arguments for staying on in the island are weak and Sri Lanka could easily mobilise international opinion in its favour, if the need arises. The compulsions of New Delhi to keep the IPKF on are more political than strategic or

Rajiv Gandhi (left) and Ranasinghe Premadasa: serious differences



GURJAN PATIL



At the moment, Premadasa has the upper hand. India's arguments for staying on in the island are weak and Sri Lanka could easily mobilise international opinion in its favour

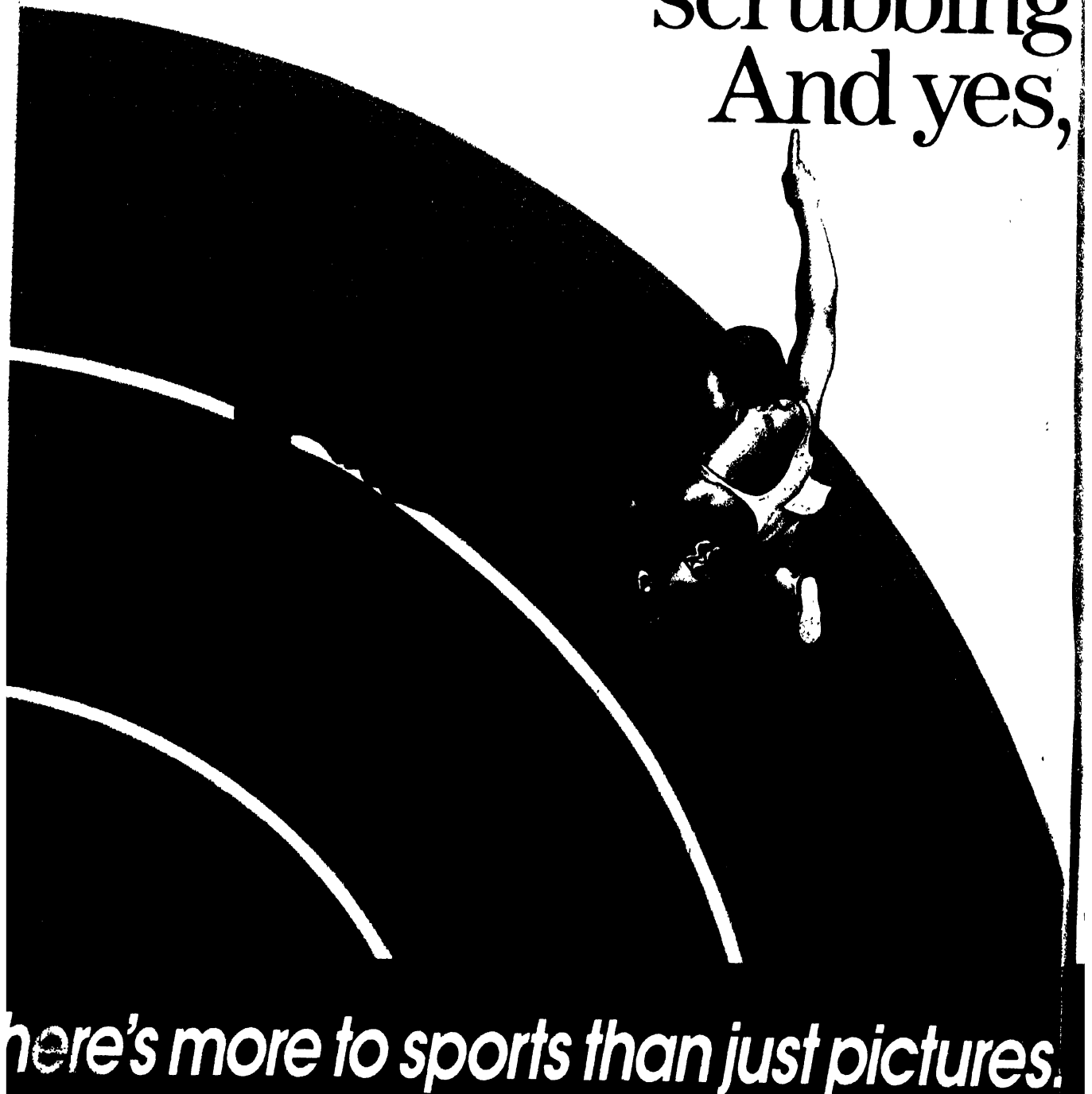
ring to "certain irresponsible statements made...to support the continued presence of the IPKF", declared: "The only condition on which the IPKF was invited to Sri Lanka and the only condition that should be satisfied for the withdrawal of the IPKF is the decision of the President

humanitarian. To leave Sri Lanka now would mean accepting that yet another of Rajiv Gandhi's accords has been a dismal failure. It would lead people to ask what the sacrifice of some 1,500 IPKF lives achieved, what good the hundreds of crores of rupees spent did. In an election year, such questions can be more than merely embarrassing.

What India needs now is a face-saving stratagem to up and out. This is perhaps why Rajiv's recent letter to Premadasa suggested that steps be taken to set up a meeting to discuss a time-frame for withdrawing the troops. India would like to be a party to the decision to pull out the IPKF. Perhaps, Premadasa acted somewhat tactlessly by asking the Indian army to go home. Things may not have come to such a pass if he had allowed India the comfort of pretending to make her own exit.

Mulund Padmanabhan

His favourite outfit is an
And he's in love with a
His silence is mistaken
He's currently
scrubbing
And yes,



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acid jean suit.
Porsche and a blonde.
as snobbery.
keeping himself fit by
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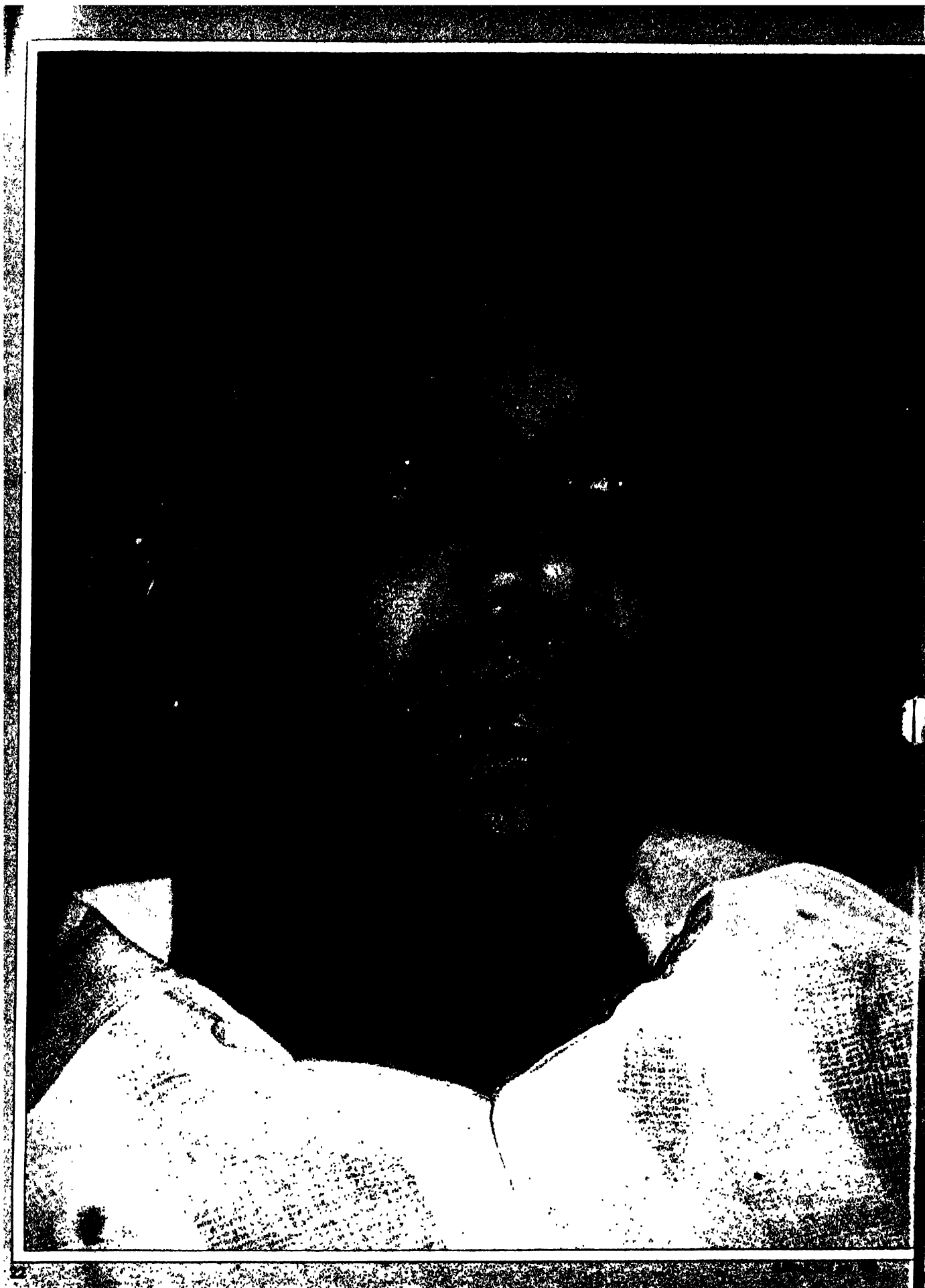
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New Look

Sportsworld



Pawar power

Always controversial, but still secure

LAST WEEK, Sharad Pawar completed one year as chief minister of Maharashtra. It is somehow, entirely appropriate that he should have ended the year, stronger than ever—but still surrounded by controversy. As talk of his impending dismissal swept Maharashtra, Rajiv Gandhi gave Pawar a ringing vote of confidence at a meeting in Nagpur. 'Rumours of Pawar's resignation are baseless, I have not received any resignation,' the Prime Minister declared, adding Maharashtra has only two leaders. They are Sharad Pawar and the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee chief Pratibha Patil. (This is less cheering for Mrs Patil than it may first seem because Gandhi then proceeded to forget who she was and called her Prabha Rani.)

The Prime Minister's statement was a slap in the face for such dissidents as A.R. Antulay who had successfully conveyed the impression that Pawar was on his way out. And it demonstrated that though Pawar is currently embroiled in a messy land scandal and has fought with the Centre over writing off loans to farmers, he still remains the country's strongest Congress(I) chief minister.

In a sense, this is how it has always been for Pawar. His rapid rise in Maharashtra politics has been accompanied by a great deal of controversy but the criticism has never stalled his advancement.

PAWAR ENTERED politics as Y.B. Chavan's protege. But he quickly demonstrated that he had a mind of his own and enough ambition to leave his friends gasping. Still, in the hierarchical structure of Maratha politics, there seemed no way for him to zoom to the top before his time. When in 1977, the Marathas toppled Shankar Rao Chavan, it was the veteran politico Vasantdada Patil who took his place. Not only did three decades separate Patil's generation from Pawar's but it was also believed that the all-powerful sugar cooperatives would not take kindly to any upstartish behaviour on his part.

Pawar turned the conventional wisdom on its head and destroyed the outward facade of Maratha unity by defecting from Patil's cabinet in 1978, sneakily arranging a deal with the Janata and becoming chief minister. In the process he earned a reputation for intrigue and disloyalty—he kept Y.B. Chavan in the dark about this scheme.

When Mrs Gandhi returned to power in 1980, she

dismissed Pawar's government. And once the Congress seized control of Maharashtra, he seemed in danger of fading away. The Marathas, on the other hand, won back some power (Shalinitai, Dada's wife, became number two in the cabinet) and once Antulay's chief ministership collapsed, returned to the helm with both Vasantdada and his nominee Shivajirao Patil Nilangekar serving stints at the head of the government.

Pawar, on the other hand, negotiated with Vijay Dhar to join the Congress(I) but when Mrs Gandhi scuppered the deal, was left behind in the Opposition. As Shalinitai put it, during this period "he paid the price for his betrayal".

THIS ASSESSMENT was deeply flawed. Pawar used the four years from 1980 to 1984 to tour the villages of Maharashtra and build up a base. In 1985, his Congress(S)—the 'S' stood for 'Socialist', not 'Sharad'—held out against the Rajiv wave and managed a strong showing in the Assembly elections. While the Marathas seemed a diminished force in state politics, Pawar's personal clout continued to grow.

Then it all went wrong—at least on the surface. He finally joined the Congress(I) and his supporters put it about that he would replace S.B. Chavan as chief minister. But having admitted him into the party, Rajiv Gandhi forgot all about Pawar and Chavan continued, undisturbed. As K.P. Unnikrishnan (whose ample form became the entire Congress-S once Pawar's group left) commented, the normally wily Sharad had miscalculated.

Not for long though. Pawar took to harassing the hapless Chavan and kept sending messages to Rajiv that the Congress(S)'s traditional base in Maharashtra plus his personal popularity could sew up the state at the next election. Faced with crisis after crisis in the post-Bofors period, Rajiv took Pawar's point. A relieved Chavan was recalled to Delhi and after a gap of eight years Pawar was back as chief minister.

EVEN PAWAR'S critics (except perhaps Antulay) concede that he will deliver Maharashtra to the Congress(I) at the next election. It is this certainty that makes him the party's strongest chief minister. Should Rajiv fire him now, it could rob the Congress of its next parliamentary majority. And then, faced with an unstable political situation, Pawar would emerge as a king-maker because of his regional clout. Either way, Pawar wins.

Pawar's enemies caution Rajiv against becoming a prisoner of Sharad's strength. They argue that Mrs Gandhi, once she finished the Syndicate never let any state chief minister get too strong. Moreover, they insist, Pawar betrayed Y.B. Chavan, his own mentor—why shouldn't he betray Rajiv some day?

It is not an argument that the Prime Minister seems inclined to accept. As far as he is concerned, Pawar is a capable administrator, can take hard political decisions and will give him lots of MPs in the next Lok Sabha.

As long as that situation endures, neither Antulay's criticisms nor any number of land scandals will affect Pawar. He may be controversial. But he's strong. ■

Rajiv Gandhi gave Sharad Pawar a ringing vote of confidence

in a meeting in Nagpur. It demonstrated that though Pawar

is embroiled in a messy land scandal, he still remains the

country's strongest Congress(I) chief minister

DREAMS DIE FAST

1979

The year changed the shape of Indian politics. Innocence was replaced by cynicism and hope with weariness

It was a year of calamitous drought, in which foodgrain production plummeted by 22 million tonnes and buffer stocks accumulated over ten years were used up. It was also a year of wonders. Who could have imagined that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran's religious patriarch, would storm his way back to Tehran from exile in France, dislodge the mighty Shah, and then unleash a movement with aftershocks strong enough to ruin the chances of a US President's re-election? On the obverse, and better, side of the coin of religion, Mother Teresa, the Albanian-born Catholic missionary who had for decades served the poor in the back-alleys of Calcutta, won the Nobel Peace Prize.

It was the year when Hindi cinema became more permissive after the success of Raj Kapoor's sex-soaked *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*; of cricketer Sunil Gavaskar crossing the 5,000-run mark; and the death of Earl Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy, in a bomb attack on his small boat by Irish guerrillas. It was also the International Year of the Child, which, to many Indian political observers, meant the year of Sanjay Gandhi. As the squeaky-voiced, prematurely-balding, bespectacled second son of Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister-in-waiting, masterminded his mother's return to power, the nation watched.

Ten years later, Indians associate 1979 with the political theatre of the *aband*, on which the curtains came

down as the first monsoon clouds rolled over the hot northern plains. The players are mostly dead now—Sanjay and Indira Gandhi, Charan Singh, Raj Narain, Jagjivan Ram, Suresh Ram and Y.B. Chavan. Others, like Morarji Desai (the Prime Minister during those turbulent times), have receded to the background. But the questions that the grim summer threw up still haunt the nation.

They relate to the inherent weaknesses in the republic's democratic processes. If the Congress defeat in 1977 represented the peak of the nation's self-confidence and its belief in the power of a free and peaceful exercise of franchise, the trough came only two years later. During that period, the country witnessed continuous social change and moderate economic reforms, but it never quite got back its self-confidence. So that on 31 October, 1984, when Mrs Gandhi was assassinated, Rajiv Gandhi's dynastic succession was taken for granted by all the dramatic personae: the President of India; members of the Congress(I) Parliamentary Board; and, later, the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party. The Congress(I) chose Rajiv as the Prime Minister for understandable reasons: Mrs Gandhi had conditioned the party to servility. But the nation accepted him as a result of the legacy of 1979: a numbing fear of choosing a ruler rather than having one foisted on it.

That fear, significantly, has come to a head now with the general elections only



months away. The mutual distrust that grew during the two years of Janata rule among Opposition politicians casts its shadow on Opposition politics today, always making a Chandra Shekhar suspect in the eyes of the Devi Lal clan. The Congress(I), too, carries the scars of the events of 1979. Opportunistic Congressmen who went against Mrs Gandhi after the poll debacle in 1977 had to swallow their pride and accept her as the leader again two years later. This broke their self-confidence and made them wary of revolt—the main reason why, despite nearly five years of dismal performance, Rajiv Gandhi is still the unquestioned leader of the Congress(I).



TARAPADA BANERJEE



THE THREE PRIME MINISTERS

- **MORARJI DESAI**
(Above) He had no option but to resign when more than 100 members of the Janata Party deserted him.
- **CHARAN SINGH**
(Left) His coalition government lasted for only 23 days.
- **INDIRA GANDHI**
(Right) By withdrawing support, she toppled Singh's government and returned from political wilderness.



The paralysis of the Janata, which left indelible marks on the nation's politics, is often remembered as a grim comedy. The two years of the party's rule were characterised by numerous *faux pas* and gags: the Shah Commission set up to enquire into the excesses of the Emergency identified 1,10,820 crimes under the Indian Penal Code or against the Constitution, but this did not lead to even a single conviction; the Speaker of the Lok Sabha announced the death of Jayaprakash Narayan on 17 March, exactly 200 days before JP actually died; pictures of the defence minister's son taking part in sexual orgies were freely distributed to news-

men by a leader of the ruling party.

At another level, the era had as much pathos as bathos. "My world lies in shambles all around me. I am afraid I shall not see it put together again in my lifetime," JP wrote in his *Prison Diary*, four years before his attempt to put it together went up in smoke. During the summer of 1979, he helplessly watched the Janata Party self-destruct, but was too sick to influence the course of events. The two governments of Morarji Desai and Charan Singh fell within a span of five weeks. After JP's death in October, Mrs Gandhi's return to power was a foregone conclusion.

The drama probably began on 12

June, the day Raj Narain—the 'giant-killer' who defeated Mrs Gandhi in Rae Bareilly—was removed from the Janata Party's central executive committee for one year. But the differences within the party came to the fore much earlier—in June the previous year—when Desai sacked Raj Narain, the health minister, and Charan Singh, the all-powerful minister for home affairs, from the Cabinet. That was only a year after the Janata ministers had taken oath of office together, and shared the glory of having routed the 'dictator', Mrs Gandhi.

Besides their ambition of defeating Indira Gandhi, Janata Party members,

A REMARKABLE COMEBACK

• Many of his friends stood by Sanjay Gandhi during his dark days. While Kamal Nath (left inset) helped him fight his legal battles, Kapil Mohan (right inset) brought him and Raj Narain together to plot the overthrow of Desai.



TANUJA BANERJEE

however, had little in common in terms of goals and they never acted together. Nor did they try to build up an ideological alternative to the Congress. Looking back at what went wrong, L.K. Advani, then information and broadcasting minister and at present the president of the BJP, says that to have Charan Singh in the Council of Ministers with Desai as the Prime Minister was "unworkable" from the word go. As early as 1977, he recalls, Charan Singh began his characteristic antics at a meeting of a Cabinet sub-committee. He arrived late (nothing unusual for a man who was often branded as the 'minister for rest'), and rose to apologise and explain the delay. But what began as an apology ended up as a forthright expression of his prime ministerial ambitions. "Charan Singh said some journalist had come to see him and had asked him if he intended to become the Prime Minister. He said he had told the journalist there was nothing wrong, as it was not wrong on the journalist's part to want to become the editor of the publication he worked for. The very next moment, Charan Singh looked at the other ministers and asked if they thought it very odd that he wanted to replace Morarji—a man of 80."

One of the principal factors which precipitated the 1979 crisis was Charan Singh's ambition—not improper by itself, but reprehensible for the no-holds-barred method applied by him. The other factor behind the disintegration was the bogey of the RSS, drummed up at periodic intervals by the Janata's

official undertakers, Raj Narain and Madhu Limaye. Limaye now says that he expressed his "doubts" about "an anti-Congress platform with the RSS on it" long before the Janata government had come into being. But the fact is that men like Narain and Limaye found the RSS issue a handy weapon to use to remove Desai. Says a senior civil servant of the time, who chooses to remain unnamed: "The real turning point came in 1977 itself, when many Janata leaders decided to overthrow Desai at any cost. The fear of the RSS was an afterthought, or a mere part of the plot."

On the other side of the spectrum stood Mrs Gandhi, presiding over a perplexed army of Congressmen who, for a while, didn't know who was the boss. But Mrs Gandhi successfully split the Congress (for the second time after 1969) in 1978. She had no option; if she hadn't created the Congress(I), named brazenly after herself, and muffled her former ministers, many of the party leaders would have appeared before the Shah Commission to depose against the former Prime Minister. As 1978 drew to an end, she was again the undisputed ruler of the Congress party, her only remaining problem being the cases instituted by the Janata government against her, her

THE EVENTS OF 1979

JANUARY

• 1
President Sanjiva Reddy inaugurates the 'International Year of the Child' in New Delhi.

• 5
Rohini-200, the first monsoon experimental rocket (MONEX), is successfully launched from Thumba.

FEBRUARY

• 1
Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran from France after nearly 15 years in exile.

• 26
District and sessions judge of Delhi finds former information and broadcasting minister, V.C. Shukla, and Sanjay Gandhi guilty of criminal conspiracy to destroy the film, *Kissa Kursi Ka*.

Ayatollah Khomeini arrives in Tehran after the Shah's ouster



MARCH



(L to r) Sadat, Carter and Begin

• 26
Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin sign a peace treaty with US President Jimmy Carter as witness.

LOOKING BACK

COVER STORY

son, and her minions.

The year 1979 thus began on an extraordinary note, with political combatants frozen momentarily in a perfect deadlock, though it was a brief lull preceding a mighty tornado. "Many of us did not foresee the storm ahead," says Advani, "otherwise Vajpayee and I would not have pleaded with Morarji to bring Charan Singh back into the Cabinet." Initially, as many of the players admit now, Desai agreed to bring Singh back only if he accepted the defence portfolio, a responsibility that would have ensured that he had the least opportunity to interfere in day-to-day politics. Advani now quotes the late Piloo Mody to say that so desperate was Singh to get back to power in those days that he would have accepted even "the health ministry".

But Morarji finally brought Singh back with full honour, making him the deputy prime minister (DPM), one up on the other DPM, Jagjivan Ram, and entrusting him with the crucial finance portfolio. Says one of Desai's principal aides from those days: "What can be more ironic than giving the finance ministry, with the revenue intelligence wing in it, to Charan Singh, a man who had been publicly clamouring for investigation into the alleged financial irregularities of the

Prime Minister's son, Kanti Desai?" Advani says though the Jan Sanghites supported the view that Singh should be brought back into the Cabinet, "we were opposed to his getting finance". But the die was already cast.

Desai's suicidal move is still an enigma. Maybe he had surmised that if Singh was given a plum ministry like finance his gratitude would stand in the way of his taking on the PM again. But Singh's feelings towards Desai were coloured

out of the Shah Commission's legal dragnet. If the Janata had not collapsed, the government could surely have delivered a knocking blow to the Gandhi family. As it was, the feuding constituents of the Janata did not know that by their actions they were helping Mrs Gandhi bail herself and her son out of a tough situation and, eventually, return to power. Or, did some of them know?

Chroniclers of those times now recall that the liquidation of the Janata gained



RAJ NARAIN

• THEN

After his dismissal as the minister for health and family welfare, he began plotting to overthrow Prime Minister Morarji Desai. After the fall of the Janata government, he became the 'working president' of the Lok Dal.

• NOW

He died on 30 December, 1986, in relative obscurity.

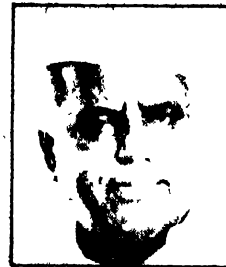
Y.B. CHAVAN

• THEN

He was the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha during Desai's rule. Morarji resigned the day before he was supposed to face his no-confidence motion. Chavan became the deputy Prime Minister and minister for home affairs after Charan Singh came to power.

• NOW

He died on 25 November, 1984, the day after he had been renominated to stand for election.



JAGJIVAN RAM

• THEN

He was one of the two deputy prime ministers during Desai's reign. When Morarji resigned, Ram was elected leader of the Janata Parliamentary Party.

• NOW

He spent the last few years of his life in political oblivion and died on 6 July, 1989.

APRIL

• 4

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is hanged in a Rawalpindi prison.

• 21

Rhodesia holds its first universal suffrage election and gets its first Black Prime Minister, Bishop Abel Muzorewa.

MAY

• 3

Margaret Thatcher, leader of the Conservative Party, becomes



Margaret Thatcher becomes the Prime Minister

Britain's first female Prime Minister.

• 17

President Sanjiva Reddy gives his assent to the Special Courts Bill.

JUNE

• 7

India's second satellite, Bhaskar, is launched from a Soviet cosmodrome.

• 14

Special court proceedings for

Jimmy Carter (left) and Brezhnev sign the SALT II accord



Emergency excesses begin.

• 18

US President Jimmy Carter and Soviet President Leonid I. Brezhnev formally sign the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II at Vienna.

momentum as the legal noose around Mrs Gandhi tightened. Earlier, as home minister, Charan Singh had made a few attempts to get at Mrs Gandhi, such as arresting her without proven charges. But, by 1979, the Janata government had armed itself with the Special Courts Act, an omnibus legislation which enabled the prosecution to speed up the trials of people accused, among other things, of subverting the Constitution. This seemed to give the ruling party the confidence to launch a full-scale attack on Indira Gandhi. Examples:

- On 26 February, district and sessions judge O.N. Vohra delivered judgment on the *Kissa Kursi Ka* case, sentencing Sanjay Gandhi and Vidya Charan Shukla, I&B minister during the Emergency, to two years' rigorous imprisonment. The operation of the order was stayed for a month though;

- On 16 April, Mrs Gandhi was for the first time charge-sheeted by the government. It was in relation to a Shah Commission case which alleged that she had misused her office to obstruct reply to some questions in Parliament on her son Sanjay's company, Maruti Technical Services;

- On 27 April, Sanjay was lodged in the Dehradun jail in connection with the Maruti roadroller case;

- On 17 May, the Special Courts Bill obtained the President's assent and was enacted;

- On 31 May, Justice A.C. Gupta submitted his 1,500-page report on Maruti, concluding with copious documentary evidence that Mrs Gandhi had misused her office to promote her son's business interests.

If luck had not favoured Mrs Gandhi, she could well have met the fate of the

TIME IT WAS!

*After the events of 1979,
none of us was ever the same*

When historians sit down to write the history of the Indian republic, they will probably see the Seventies as the decisive decade, as one that changed the face of Indian politics. In 1971, Indira Gandhi won a landslide after splitting the Congress party. In 1974, Jayaprakash Narayan led a mass movement against corruption, the likes of which India had never seen before. In 1975, Indira Gandhi retaliated by suspending the freedoms her father had fought so hard for. In 1976, she forced her delinquent son Sanjay on the country, making it clear that she was out to create a dynasty. In 1977, the Indian people threw her out of her own seat in Rae Bareilly, thus proving that even the poor needed freedom at least as much as they wanted bread.

And 1979? Well, that was the year the dream died—several dreams, in fact. Gone was the dream of the socialist revolution that had begun in 1971—now, Mrs Gandhi was only in it for herself. Gone also was JP's dream of an end to corruption (if not a total revolution): his Janata had been as corrupt as its predecessors.

And as for the notion that India was a mature parliamentary democracy where parties shared power—

**MUCH OF WHAT
WE NOW TAKE FOR
GRANTED BEGAN
IN 1979**



THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE GANDHIS

sadly, that too died a painful death in 1979. The national Opposition that the people had reposed so much faith in only two years before turned out to be a rag-tag collection of opportunistic buffoons—few, if any, of whom could attract more than three crows to a public meeting outside the Hindi belt. A new, unrepentant Indira Gandhi, street-fighting son in tow, gleefully toppled two governments and recaptured power. From then on, dynasty was a part of life.

Much of what we now take for granted began in 1979. The magazine boom had started in 1977, shaped out of outrage over the Emergency and fired by the idealism of the post-Congress era. After

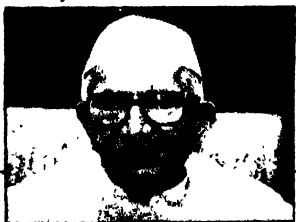
THE EVENTS OF 1979

JULY

- 11 Opposition leader Y.B. Chavan tables no-confidence motion against the Desai government in the Lok Sabha.

- 15 Prime Minister Morarji Desai resigns.

Morarji Desai



- 28 Charan Singh is sworn in as Prime Minister of India's first coalition government.

AUGUST

- 20 Charan Singh resigns as the Prime Minister.

- 22 Mrinal Sen's film, *Parasuram*, wins the silver medal in the 11th International Film Festival in Moscow.

- 27 Earl Mountbatten, the last British

Viceroy, is killed when a bomb planted by members of the IRA destroys his fishing boat off the coast of Ireland.

SEPTEMBER

- 20 Sunil Gavaskar becomes the only player in the Indian

Sunil Gavaskar



sub-continent to cross the 5,000-run mark in Test cricket.



Prakash Padukone

- 22 Prakash Padukone wins the men's singles title of the first Open Badminton Tournament, beating Morten Frost Hansen (Denmark) in London.



THE ADVENT OF THE GODMEN

Dhirendra Brahmachari (left) and Chandra Swami

GENTLEMAN Society Bombay

THE BOOM IN GLOSSIES

1979, the political magazines settled into a cynical detachment and that year, the glossies appeared (first *Bombay*, then *Society* and *Gentleman*).

The *tantriks* strode onto centre-stage in 1979. Dhirendra Brahmachari made it clear that he was the Rasputin of Indira Gandhi's court and Chandra Swami first hit the big-time by becoming the intermediary between Sanjay and Charan Singh.

The safari-suited, high-living politician made his first appearance in the lobby of Delhi's glitzy Taj Mahal Hotel, whose Chinese restaurant became the Sanjay gang's dining-room and Machan, its coffee-shop, the group's canteen. Gone was the austere, Gandhi-capped Congress-

man of old. The new breed—men like Kamal Nath, A.R. Antulay, Jagdish Tytler, etc.—lived well and were proud of it.

More than anything else, 1979 marked the launch of the bureaucratic-industrial-political nexus. Dhirubhai Ambani, till then regarded as a friend of Kanti Desai's, suddenly emerged as Mrs Gandhi's vocal supporter; Kapil Mohan helped during the last days of the Janata; Bala Subramaniam set Charan Singh off to chase Kanti; Charanjit Singh took his place at Sanjay's side; and the ubiquitous Suris mattered in Delhi.

What was sad about 1979 was that much of the chaos was caused by those who meant well. The men who helped destroy the Janata government thought they were fighting for secularism, and against the dominance of the Jan Sangh. Yet, in the process, they let Mrs Gandhi in.

At Race Course Road, they must have fond memories of 1979. Two years before, the nation had voted for democracy over dynasty. And yet, as democracy spelled disorder, dynasty made an astonishing comeback.

This was not how it was supposed to be; not what the struggle that led to Independence had been about. But 32 years after India awoke to freedom, it went through another metamorphosis. And the events of 1979 tempered the confidence of 1947—perhaps forever.

Shah of Iran or Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. But, to Mrs Gandhi's great relief, the internecine wranglings within the Janata raced towards a climax from 12 June, when the Janata Party disciplinary action committee decided to remove Raj Narain from the party's national executive for a year. The events that led up to this decision were Desai's stubborn but logical refusal to invite Narain back into the Cabinet, and the collapse of the three state Cabinets of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Haryana, all led by men from Singh's BLD (Bharatiya Lok Dal) faction, between mid-February and end-June. According to Limaye, "Raj Narain took it (Desai's decision to remove chief ministers of the BLD faction) as a personal insult."

Reminisces George Fernandes: "In 1979, one didn't need outstanding intelligence to hear the rumblings in the Janata Party. But the imminent collapse of the government became clear to me only after the resignation of Raj Narain." As a matter of fact, from the day of his ouster, 12 June, Narain began mobilising MPs against Desai. Besides, he also served as the middleman between Charan Singh and Sanjay Gandhi, who both wanted to remove Desai for different reasons. Singh saw himself as the next Prime Minister, after Desai. Sanjay and his mother realised that the only way to stop the Special Court trials was by toppling Morarji Desai's Cabinet and installing a pliable PM in his place.

Recalls Kamal Nath, Congress MP and Sanjay's schoolmate: "In the summer of '79 I couldn't gaze into some crystal-ball and see that we were coming back to power. I don't think anyone could. The only task before us was to see that there was no kangaroo court

OCTOBER

- 8 Jayaprakash Narayan dies.
- 17 Mother Teresa wins the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 26 South Korean President, Park Chung Hee, is assassinated by Kim Jae Kyu, head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

NOVEMBER

- 4 Several hundred Iranian



Mother Teresa

militants seize the US embassy in Teheran. They threaten to hold the hostages till the deposed Shah, undergoing treatment in New York, is returned to Iran.

- 10 President Sanjiva Reddy opens India's first International Trade Fair in New Delhi.

- 13 The Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding is conferred on the South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela.

- 20 Several hundred Muslim extremists seize control of the Grand Mosque in Mecca—Islam's most sacred shrine.

Heavy Soviet tanks prowl the streets of Afghanistan



DECEMBER

- 20 The Delhi High Court quashes the prosecution of Indira Gandhi and Pranab Mukherjee for refusal to depose before the Shah Commission.
- 27 The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.

trial." Nath showed great ingenuity in carrying out his 'task'. He held quiet parleys with a judge of the Calcutta High Court and convinced him that the Special Courts Act contradicted human rights—a subject of passionate concern to His Lordship. When Mrs Gandhi was served with the summons under the Special Courts Act, the Congress(I) petition came up before the same judge. All that Nath had done to 'fix' this was to send Mrs Gandhi to Darjeeling, in West Bengal and well within the High Court's jurisdiction, nearly a week before the issue of summons to her. Of course, there were 'friends' in the home ministry who kept the Congress(I) informed about when the summons would be issued to Indira Gandhi.

The Calcutta judge stayed the order for weeks, probably without realising that the nation's political complexion would change drastically in the meantime. But, for Mrs Gandhi and her camp, time was of the essence. On 23 June, Raj Narain formally resigned from the Janata Party at Sanjay Gandhi's bidding. Devi Lal resigned as the chief minister of Haryana on the same day, smarting under the insult that Desai's men had asked him to seek a 'confidence vote' in the Assembly before 28 June. By 2 July, Charan Singh was publicly saying that he

LOOKING BACK



CHARAN SINGH

• THEN

As the president of the Janata Party, he was always at loggerheads with Prime Minister Morarji Desai. He spurned the offer of a Cabinet post because he believed the party needed him more.

• NOW

One of the few Opposition leaders with a mass base, he is in the Janata Dal. He is believed to be having prime ministerial ambitions.

GEORGE FERNANDES

• THEN

He was the minister for industry in the Desai Cabinet. After the fall of the government, he joined other socialists and the Janata(S) headed by Raj Narain to launch the Lok Dal under the presidency of Charan Singh.

• NOW

He is a general secretary of the Janata Dal.



ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE

• THEN

He was the minister for external affairs in the Janata government. After the disintegration of the Janata Party, he and other Jan Sangh men reconstituted themselves as the B J P.

• NOW

A prominent BJP leader and former president of the party, he has recently been holding talks with the Janata Dal about a possible seat adjustment formula for the next general election.



THE FAILURE OF THE JANATA

• **Morarji Desai** never got along with his deputy PM Charan Singh; Jayaprakash Narayan helplessly watched the Janata Party self-destruct; and after his death, Indira Gandhi's return to power was inevitable.

had nothing to do with Narain's antics. But his sleuths were working overtime to gather details of Kanti Desai's business activities. And Mrs Gandhi's men were constantly in touch with him, often through his astrologer.

The fall of the Desai government began on 9 July, when 13 Janata MPs quit the 302-member Janata Parliamentary Party (in a House of 539). "Morarji was so unaware of what was happening that even on that night (9 July), he was talking about ordering an enquiry against Biju Patnaik, his steel minister," Limaye remembers. However, on 10 July, 14 more MPs left, bringing down the par-



ty's strength to 275. The next day another 22 deserted the party, bringing down the number of Janata MPs to 253. This meant that it no longer enjoyed a majority. On 12 July, the party lost seven more MPs.

Meanwhile Y.B. Chavan, as the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, brought a no-confidence motion. A four-day debate on the motion began on 11 July. On 13 July the last working day of the week, Desai's problem was to get any of his senior ministers to speak in defence of the government. It was Fernandes who ultimately obliged him and delivered a moving speech in support of the virtually indefensible Janata government. "I didn't have the heart to speak, yet I felt it was the time one should intervene to prevent the slide. I agreed to speak because the heavyweights—Ravindra Verma, Vajpayee, Jagjivan Ram—had all declined to defend Morarji's government. Charan Singh was not even approachable," recollects Fernandes.

A day after the speech, Fernandes formally requested Desai to step down at a meeting of the Janata Parliamentary Board. But, as Fernandes recalls, Desai was still suffering from an "illusion of power"; in fact, he was confident that the Marxists and a large army of

As the leaders of the Janata Party squabbled among themselves in 1979, Mrs Gandhi won back the people's confidence. Even today, there are many hurdles in the way of Opposition unity

assorted Independents would support him even at that eleventh hour. Charan Singh, as usual, did not even attend the parliamentary board meeting. On 15 July, Sunday, the deluge began in the morning: Fernandes, Limaye, Mrinal Gore, Purushottam Kaushik—the entire band of socialists left together. Desai finally resigned in the afternoon, a shattered man perhaps, but, as Limaye says, "not quite convinced that he was at fault".

The rest of the year is a kaleidoscope of events that eventually led to Mrs Gandhi's triumphant return in 1980. She pulled the rug from under the feet of

Charan Singh, the interim Prime Minister, and withdrew support to his government on 20 August, only 23 days after he had come to office. "We were asking him (Singh) to abolish the Special Courts Act, knowing full well that it was impossible for him to do so," Nath says. In fact, it was a ruse to knock Singh off the throne, and to force mid-term elections.

There are widely divergent views about the reasons behind the decline of the Janata government. Limaye, for instance, believes that the Janata was "born with a cancer". To him, the "cancer" was the RSS and its vice-like grip over the former Jan Sangh men in the Janata who constituted about one-fourth of the parliamentary party. "We socialists could either throw them out or get out ourselves," he explains.

Advani, naturally, considers the RSS a non-issue, a bogey used by greedy politicians to cover up their own inability to share power and to assemble on a common platform. He says the Janata was doomed from the moment its "responsible members", including himself, committed an "error of judgement" by coaxing Desai to bring Charan Singh back to the Cabinet.

On the other hand, Fernandes thinks the primary blunder was to listen to Acharya Kripalani's advice in 1977 and accept Desai as the leader. "It would have been all right if the parliamentary party had elected Morarji as the leader. But he wasn't elected; he was anointed," he says.

Since then, a decade has passed. But many questions still remain unanswered. If Charan Singh was dying to be the Prime Minister, why did he throw away his chance so easily and so soon? If Desai's political antennae were so rusted that he could not see a gun pointing at his head, why did senior civil servants not alert him? Besides, who induced Raj Narain to cause a landslide in the Janata Parliamentary Party? Was Kapil Mohan his only backer, or was he the proverbial cat's paw? Was a bureaucratic-industrial nexus emerging in India in 1979, and beginning to influence the course of politics?

Maybe the Janata men were, as Karl Marx said about the French peasantry, "clumsily cunning, knavishly naive, doltishly sublime". If they were less mixed up, they could perhaps have been guided by pure self-interest and remained in power for a longer spell. But then that would have made the summer of '79 forgettable—a tiny wart on the face of time.

Sumit Mitra



A threat to Trincomallee

The EPRLF accuses President Premadasa of planning to topple the Perumal government

SRI LANKA

President Premadasa never ceases to be controversial. Close on the heels of his announcement on 1 June calling for the IPKF to leave his country within two months, comes another bombshell. The ruling party in the north-east, the EPRLF (Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front) has charged that he wanted to dismiss the government and arrest its top leaders, by imposing a state of Emergency in the island.

In a statement captioned 'Drama Behind the Declaration of Emergency', the EPRLF declared: "According to the information we have gathered from Sri Lankan cabinet sources, the declaration of Emergency is the result of a conspiracy of the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE to dissolve the provincial government and arrest the chief minister and



Premadasa: planning to strike

other ministers of the north-east." The statement was circulated by the EPRLF office in Madras and made front-page news in the city's Tamil dailies.

According to sources, a group of IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) personnel contacted EPRLF activists at the party's Madras office late in the night of 1 June and handed over a despatch from the party's headquarters in Trincomallee for circulation among the local media. "The matter is serious; we have information that the government may be dismissed any moment," an EPRLF functionary told SUNDAY.

According to the EPRLF, the declaration of Emergency in Sri Lanka was the outcome of a secret agreement that Premadasa had reached with the LTTE. The next step in this "conspiracy", the EPRLF feels, would be the dismissal of the Perumal government and the arrest of the chief minister and his aides. The beleaguered EPRLF has, therefore, cal-

led upon "the leaders of the Tamil-speaking people and all the democratic parties to rise against the vicious plot to overthrow the duly elected government". The appeal was, obviously, directed at India, on whom the EPRLF is now banking for support.

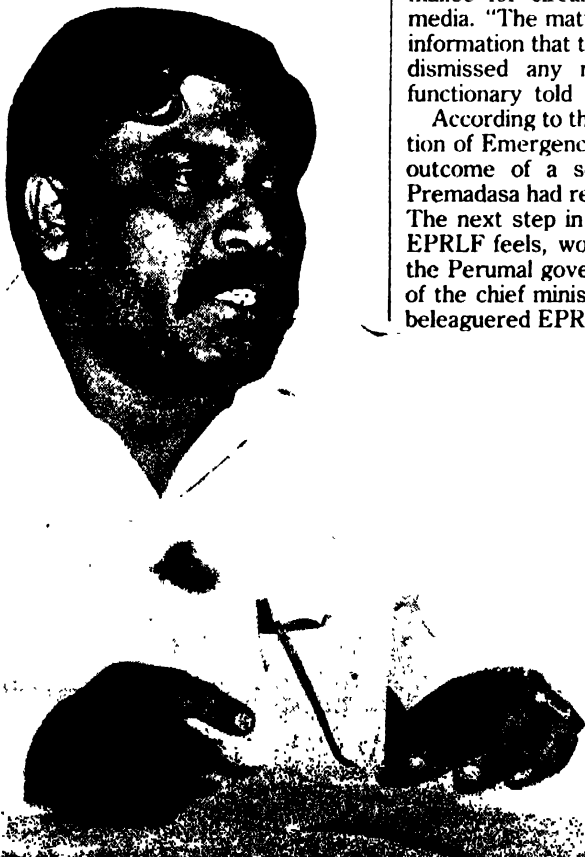
The Tamil groups that supported the Indo-Sri Lanka accord are evidently nervous. A recent offensive, in which the LTTE overran a camp of a rival group, PLOT (People's Liberation of Tamil Eelam), making it clear that they remain militarily supreme, and Premadasa's 1 June declaration that the IPKF must leave Sri Lanka within two months, have created consternation among the moderates.

The EPRLF has alleged that the Sri Lankan army was providing shelter to the LTTE guerrillas and arming the Tigers to fight the IPKF and other Tamil groups more effectively. In the emergent situation, says the EPRLF, the future of the plantation Tamils, many of whom are still Indian citizens, hangs in the balance. The anti-India campaign whipped up by the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) and the JVP (Janata Vimukti Peramuna) and covertly supported by the UNP (United National Party) has resulted in violence against the plantation workers of Indian origin, the EPRLF has alleged. "Sinhala hooligans with the support of the security forces are threatening the lives of the Tamil people in the hill country. There is a possibility of genocidal killings," it states.

The frenetic pace of developments in Sri Lanka will take another dramatic turn if India chooses to intervene on the side of the government at Trincomallee in the light of the fears expressed by the EPRLF. Already, the IPKF has significantly stepped up its offensive against the LTTE in the north and the east, possibly in response to the EPRLF allegation that the Tigers are hiding in Sri Lankan army camps.

Apprehending a spurt in violence in the Tamil areas, the pro-accord groups have launched a recruitment drive to strengthen their forces. They are enrolling young men in their ranks and giving them training in arms. The LTTE, too, is wooing the youth and initiating them in guerrilla warfare in its jungle hideouts. In short, for the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the future could not have been more confusing and uncertain.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras



Verudaraja Perumal:
facing an
uncertain future

The great debate

Tariq Anwar denounces Shahabuddin's call for a Muslim meet

COMMUNALISM

If communalism is public enemy number one, as Rajiv Gandhi declared at one of his rallies recently, at least one Congress(I) leader, Tariq Anwar, is doing what he can to fight it. The young Rajya Sabha MP, former president of the Bihar Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (PCC-I), made it clear to Janata MP Syed Shahabuddin that he wouldn't like to take part in a meet of Indian Muslims to "chalk out a future political strategy" because he didn't believe the Muslims were the sole "guardians of India's secular character".

The Janata leader sent out invitations to prominent members of the community to take part in the National Political Convention of Muslim Indians to be held



Tariq Anwar: making a point

in the capital on 8-9 July. It was a step, he claimed, he had taken after "much thought and deep analysis of the political situation in the country". He added that "if some serious and experienced people from all over the country get together, I think we can achieve some meaningful results".

Anwar didn't think so. In his reply to the Janata leader he wrote, "While there are no two opinions on the need to combat communalism, of all varieties, and to work effectively for the six objectives you have mentioned...the line of action which you have unilaterally evolved will be counter-productive."

Anwar found fault with the Janata leader's presumption that "Muslims alone have to act as guardians of India's secular character". He said it is a claim "exactly similar to that of the RSS chief, Balasaheb Deoras, who says that Hindus alone are the guardians of India's secularism, socialism and democracy". He wrote that just as the RSS was trying to organise the Hindus on one platform, the Janata leader was intent on banding the Muslims on another. He told Shahabuddin that he was trying to build a Muslim bloc just as Deoras was trying to build a Hindu bloc. "What else could suit the communal chauvinists than such a development?" Anwar wondered.

Anwar argued that no single party, much less a single individual, could stem the sectarianism and fanaticism that was being introduced into politics in the name of promoting or defending the interests of different religious communities and sects. He said he feared that the Opposition leader's "endeavour is going to end up as no more than a personal enterprise on the election eve to grab the lime-light".

Shahabuddin argued that the bogey of a 'Hindu backlash' was being used to justify all kinds of unjust and unethical stands on burning issues and pave the way to dubious alliances and adjustments that threatened to seal India's secular future. He said that the administration was so deeply penetrated by communal elements at all levels that it could no longer be regarded as impartial.

Anwar, on the other hand, has argued that "the problem of aggressive Hindu *Rashtravad* is not the problem of Muslims alone; it is a national problem," the solutions to which can only be found through a collective national effort. Reminding Shahabuddin of his call to the Muslims to boycott the Republic Day celebrations, he said it was a move that alienated most secular Muslims and non-Muslims. Anwar has criticised Shahabuddin's circular by saying that it created the erroneous impression that non-Muslims were not concerned at the upsurge of communalism. Anwar, however, agreed with Shahabuddin's contention that communalism was on the rise. But, that, he argued, was because of the slackening of the vigil on communal forces. And much of this, concluded Anwar, was due to the Opposition's blind anti-Congress stance and its unprincipled pursuit of power.

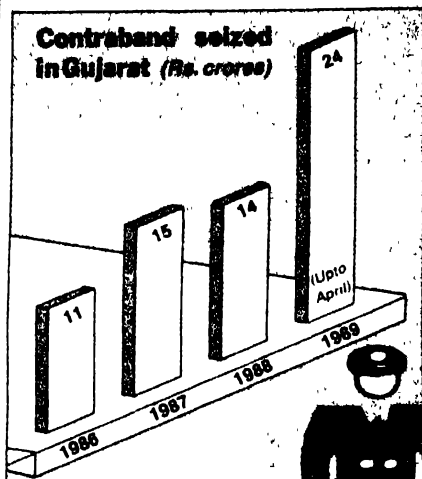
Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

Smugglers' haven

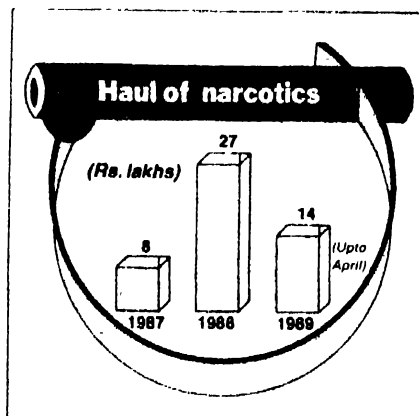
Gold and narcotics swamp the coastal districts of the state

GUJARAT

Gujarat is fast becoming a smugglers' haven. The state's 1,600-km coastline—the longest for any one state in the country—provides smugglers with ample opportunities to sneak in gold and narcotics without much hindrance, as it is virtually impossible for the customs authorities to man the innumerable landing points. During the last three years, the customs department seized contraband worth several tens of crores of rupees, but the haul in the first four months of this year broke all previous records.



The customs officials, who have to cope with the growing ingenuity of the smuggler gangs, seized contraband worth Rs 11 crores in 1986, Rs 15 crores in 1987, and Rs 14 crores in 1988. But the catch till April this year outstripped earlier tallies by touching an all-time high of Rs 24 crores, with gold alone accounting for as much as Rs 23 crores. However, what the authorities find more disturbing is the rapid growth in the volume of narcotics being smuggled into the state and the increasing sophistication of the way it is being done. Narcotics such as *charas*, *ganja*, brown sugar and cocaine worth Rs 8 lakhs were seized in 1987, but rose



alarmingly to Rs 27 lakhs last year. And, till April this year, drugs worth Rs 14 lakhs were impounded.

The methods adopted by the smugglers are smart enough to deceive all but the most seasoned inspectors. On 19 May, a gift parcel arrived at the foreign sub-post office in Ahmedabad from Sharjah. When opened, it was found to contain an exquisite doll and a tin of biscuits for a city trader. But on closer examination, the toy was to contain a gold chain weighing one kg and valued at Rs 3 lakhs. Later, interrogation of the consignee led to the seizure of gold ornaments worth Rs one lakh from his house and jewellery valued at Rs 9 lakhs from his neighbour's premises.

A travel agent, who was held in Bulson district in May, used to pass on heroin to unsuspecting foreigners by packing the powder inside the hollowed-out covers of expensive books which the travellers would be requested to deliver to the agent's "friends" in the USA.

According to Virendra Singh, collector of customs, the districts of Banaskantha and Kutch, bordering Pakistan, have become the most notorious region of late. Nearly 35 people were arrested under COFEPOSA (Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities) Act from the two districts last year, but by April this year as many as 59 people were held, of whom 18 are being detained on charges of drug smuggling.

Says B.V. Kumar, member, Central Board of Excise and Customs: "Contraband are brought into Gujarat from Pakistan on camels. Countless refineries are operating in Karachi, converting hemp flowers into narcotic powder or pills and an investment of just Rs 35 can fetch you a million dollars." So, as long as the possibilities of making a fortune remain, Gujarat, it seems, will continue to be the haunt of smuggler dons and a nightmare for customs officials.

Maheesh Trivedi/Ahmedabad

Plot within a plot

Arjun Singh's men try to upset a government function in Gwalior

MADHYA PRADESH

One would imagine former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Arjun Singh to be without work. But active politician that he is, Arjun Singh never seems to run out of things to do—especially when it comes to sniping at his rivals within the Congress(I). Singh's latest move—aimed at humiliating Union minister and Gwalior Congressman Madhavrao Scindia—would have succeeded were it not for the

Initially in the possession of the army, the government of Madhya Pradesh made a request for a portion of the 144 acres of land held by the defence authorities. A big hospital, the MP government stated, would be built on it. The defence department had no problems and handed over the land to the state's revenue department, which in turn gave it to the health department.

Just when news about the foundation-stone-laying ceremony was announced, Shambhu Dayal put forward his claim saying he was the actual owner of the land. He had proof, he said, since he possessed the title deed of the land. The state government had, apparently, given him the *patta* (deed) for the land in 1961. If Dayal is to be believed, by 1961 the

The Shambhu Dayal episode, claimed Congress(I) insiders, was the result of the infighting between former chief minister Arjun Singh's camp and that led by Motilal Vora and Madhavrao Scindia



Rajiv Gandhi at the foundation stone-laying

timely intervention by chief minister Motilal Vora.

It all started a couple of days before the laying of the foundation-stone of the Gwalior-based 600-bed Indira Gandhi Memorial Medical Institute by Rajiv Gandhi. The Vora government, which was gearing itself to welcome the Prime Minister for the function on 10 June, was shocked to learn that the land on which the institute was to be constructed belonged not to the government but to Shambhu Dayal, a resident of Marar, Gwalior. Dayal backed out at the eleventh hour to sign an affidavit stating that the land in question did not belong to him. But before that happened, a chain of events had threatened to jeopardise the Prime Minister's visit.

The story of the land at Gola Ka Mandir, Gwalior, dates back to 1986.

defence authorities had transferred the land or a part of it to the state government's revenue department. And it is from the revenue department that Dayal had acquired a portion of it.

So, when in 1986, the state government decided to go ahead with the 600-bed hospital, Dayal filed a case. Strangely, the state government against which the case had been filed, remained silent. The court issued a number of notices, but no one bothered to reply. As a consequence, the court granted a stay order and fined the state government Rs 30 on 1 January, 1989 for failing to reply to its notices.

The matter would, perhaps, have remained buried in the dusty files of the court were it not for the fact that the Prime Minister's secretariat was in-

formed through an anonymous telephone call that the ownership of the hospital land was in dispute. No sooner had the message been relayed by the PM's office to the state government, than chief minister Vora and his cabinet colleagues found themselves in a tizzy. The ripples of the telephone call even reached Madhavrao Scindia—then camping in Gwalior for the PM—who would have lost face and popular support if Rajiv Gandhi had abandoned his tour. A few hours later, the truth about the dispute came to light, when Scindia was approached by Ramashankar Singh, a Congress MLA owing allegiance to Arjun Singh, with an offer. Shambhu Dayal, he said, was willing to forgo his claim if Rs 32 lakhs was made available to him. When the railway minister refused, the demand was hastily reduced to Rs one lakh. Strangely, while all this was going on, Shambhu Dayal remained untraced. It was only a couple of hours before the



Money of the hospital: Scindia wins

PM's function that the state administration found out that the *patta* which Dayal claimed he owned was fake. More, the land in question could not have been given to Dayal in 1961 because it was only in 1986 that the defence department transferred the land to the state government.

The Shambhu Dayal episode, claimed insiders, was the result of the infighting between former chief minister Arjun Singh's camp and that led by Motilal Vora and Madhavrao Scindia. Over the last few months, Arjun Singh has stepped up his fight against the Scindia-Vora combine and if his machinations in Gwalior had succeeded, he would not only have humbled Scindia but also humiliated party chief Rajiv Gandhi.

No, minister

The Assam government asks the Centre not to send S.M. Dev to visit the state

ASSAM The only person the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) seems to be wary of is Santosh Mohan Dev, the Union minister of state for home. Now that the honeymoon between the AGP and the Centre is over, the feeling has gained ground that Dev, a wily politician from Cachar, a Bengali-dominated district in the state, is being used by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as his hatchet man to create problems for the state government.

Chief minister Prafulla Mahanta has repeatedly accused Dev of having instigated the Bodos to agitate for a separate homeland, and his visits to the state, once every month, are closely monitored by the state intelligence department. The publicity department, which is directly under Mahanta, is always prompt in issuing press releases to counter the tirade which Dev unleashes every time he visits the state. But this war of attrition took a curious turn in mid-June when the state government instructed its officials not to call on Dev, even if they were to be officially summoned by the minister. This move, considered "extraordinary" by both the officialdom and the media, is expected to further embitter the already sour relations between the Centre and the state



Santosh Mohan Dev: persona non grata

government.

The circular was, apparently, issued in retaliation to Dev's 'order', in which he asked the state director general of police, S.V. Subramaniam, on 13 June, to provide security to Congress(I) MLAs, who had allegedly been heckled inside the Assembly during the elections to two Rajya Sabha seats, for one of which former Assam chief minister Hiteswar Saikia was the Congress(I) nominee. Dev also complained that he had received anonymous phone calls, threatening him with "dire consequences" for actively canvassing for Saikia. Mahanta and his colleagues did not take kindly to Dev's orders to Subramaniam, a state government official. Said Mahanta: "Instead of directly ordering my director general of police, Dev could have taken the matter up with me. Union ministers are definitely not above protocol." Last year, Dev had admonished the former police commissioner of Calcutta, B.K. Basu, after his car was stoned by CPI(M) supporters at Taratala. Like Mahanta, West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu, too, had taken serious exception to Dev's action.

Indeed, the tussle between the AGP and Dev created serious crises in the past. For instance, on 30 May, Dev was asked by Dispur not to visit Guwahati the following day on the plea that his presence would increase the tension that had been created by the controversy over the site for setting up a central university in the state. Dev, however, consulted home minister Buta Singh and flew to Guwahati, ignoring the AGP request. When asked to comment on the matter, Dev said, "The AGP bigwigs always allege that it was I who manipulated the Centre's decision to set up the proposed central university in Cachar instead of at Nalpam, near Tezpur, as demanded by them. This has put the AGP on a confrontationist course with the Centre."

Though the Centre has assured the state government that it has no intention of imposing President's Rule in Assam, the AGP leadership does not seem to have changed its stand vis-a-vis Dev. Mahanta has shot off a letter to Buta Singh, urging him to dissuade Dev from touring the Brahmaputra valley. The chief minister fears that Dev may try to instigate the tribals and the linguistic minorities against the government and thus destabilise it.

Santanu Ghosh/Guwahati and Silchar

Life after death

Government officials harass V.B. Singh's family after his death

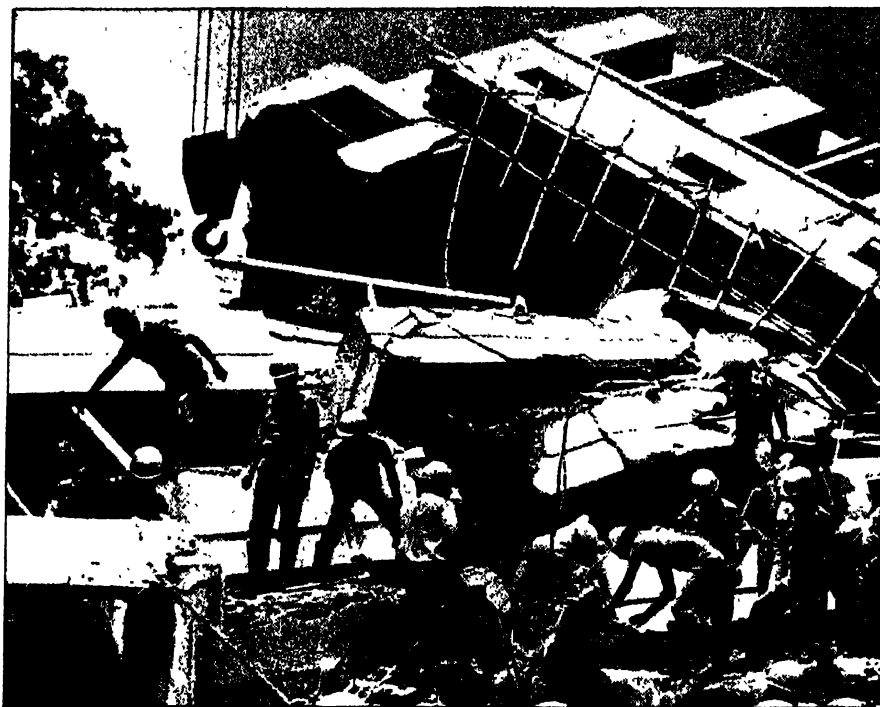
DELHI Has Veer Bahadur Singh, the former UP chief minister and Union communications minister, fallen from grace after his death? If the attitude of the communications department, which is said to be harassing the members of his family and personal staff, is any indication, yes. Veer Bahadur's son Fateh Bahadur Singh, called on the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, recently to apprise him of the ill-treatment that was being meted out to his family by the officials of the communications ministry, particularly by B.K. Dey, secretary of the Telecom Commission.

Singh's son told the Prime Minister that immediately after his father's death, the car that was allotted to him was withdrawn by the officers, leaving the family with no mode of personal transport. The car, which was bullet-proof and air-conditioned, was being used by one of the officials, who was not entitled to it. The cars which were at the disposal of Singh's personal staff, including that of his personal secretary, an IAS officer, were withdrawn without notice.

What was obviously in bad form, all the telephones at his New Delhi, Lucknow and Gorakhpur residences were disconnected soon after his death, when rules provide that a minister, even if he resigns or is sacked, can retain the cars and the telephones given to him as a minister up to one month.

Members of Singh's family allege that Telecom Commission officials locked the minister's chamber after his death and removed some of his personal belongings. It was only after the family threatened to file an FIR with the police that the chamber was opened. The room was a picture of disarray with Singh's clothes strewn on the floor, and many articles, which he used to keep in a cupboard, were found missing. As per rules, the articles given to a minister by the government for personal use can be retained by his family as memorabilia. According to an eyewitness, Singh's room was virtually looted after the news of his death reached the ministry.

Rajiv Gandhi/New Delhi



The building that collapsed; (inset) mayor Kamal Basu: the price of corruption

Highrise hoax

The CMC finds itself in a tight spot following the collapse of a multistoried building

WEST BENGAL There was neither tremor nor tornado. Yet, at a little past 10 pm on 19 June, the residents of Dr Rajendra Road in the Bhowanipore area of south Calcutta, were witness to an apocalyptic happening. Many of them had barely switched off their television sets and were preparing to retire for the day when they saw something that they, at first, mistook for hallucination. A newly-constructed, seven-storied building that was to be ready for occupation by September, was swaying like a giant crane. Seconds later, in a deafening crash, the building collapsed like a house of cards, enveloping the neighbourhood in a thick pall of dust, leaving 11 people dead and many trapped in the rubble.

The incident had no parallel in Calcutta's history and civic bodies such as the fire brigade, the police and the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) were at their wits' end trying to carry out rescue operations. The army, too, was called in to help, but they were hamstrung by the

lack of any proper infrastructural facilities.

In a sense, the collapse of the luxury apartment brought to light the rot that had set in the city's real estate business and the CMC. Local newspapers had been writing about the all-pervasive corruption in the CMC's building department since 1985, but neither the mayor, Kamal Kumar Basu, nor Bhattacharya, both of the CPI(M), took any steps to cleanse the administration. The building industry, which is said to be the only growth sector in the state, has been making huge profits by impudently violating building rules with the CMC indulgently looking on. "Show me one highrise in Calcutta built in the last ten years which has not infringed on the city building laws," says Salloo Choudhury, himself a builder.

Why did the house that Kundalia built collapse? The immediate reaction of mayor Basu to this disaster was to point an accusing finger at the building's architect, Dilip Chatterjee, in an obvious attempt to deflect attention from the failings of the CMC's building department.

While it is true that Chatterjee had made the plan that the CMC sanctioned,



Drama in real life

A district collector uses the silver screen to settle scores with a minister

ORISSA

Art imitates life but would it be proper to use this argument to settle personal scores? A fierce debate is raging in Orissa over this question ever since the film, *Chakaa Aakhi Sabu Dekhuchhi* (Lord Jagannath is Watching Everything), was released in the state on 9 June.

The movie, which has ruffled quite a few feathers, is no different from the run of the mill trash that is regularly churned out but for the fact that it is scripted by the controversial collector of Cuttack district, Priyabrata Patnaik. What is

many Hindi blockbusters. But what immediately struck viewers is the unmistakable parallel between the incidents in the film and the tussle between Priyabrata Patnaik and Jugal Kishore Patnaik. For quite some time now, the bureaucrat and the minister are at loggerheads and had it not been for chief minister J.B. Patnaik, Priyabrata would have found himself languishing in some remote corner of Orissa. It is believed that the chief minister is not too happy with his law minister but is forced to tolerate him because of political expediency.

The hostility between Priyabrata and Jugal Patnaik dates back to 1987, when as collector of Balasore district, the bureaucrat had taken stern action against the minister's son for misusing the inspection bungalow at Bhadrak. An angry Jugal Kishore reported the matter

his services as the supervising architect were terminated by Kundalia way back in November 1988. Chatterjee had informed the CMC about this development through a letter, which the chief architect's department received on 28 November last year. Strangely, the city architect made no attempt to stop the construction work despite having received the letter, but allowed it to continue even without the supervision of any technically competent person, in violation of building rules. Kundalia had entrusted the supervision work to a *darwan*, who also acted as the project's storekeeper and cashier, and CMC building inspectors who were supposed to keep a watch on all highrise apartments coming up in the city, decided to cast a blind eye on the goings-on. Whether this was for a "consideration" is, of course, only a matter of conjecture.

Kundalia, 30, an air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment dealer who has built five multistoried buildings in the city, went into hiding soon after the disaster, as did his *darwan*. But even four days after the incident, the CMC had not filed an FIR against Kundalia, the police revealed. Nor had a three member enquiry committee, which the government promised to form to go into the matter, been constituted. Perhaps the CMC was buying time to cover its tracks in an affair that reeked of a major scandal.

Sudipt Dutta/Calcutta



A scene from the film: celluloid vendetta

more, the film is produced by Arniya Ranjan Patnaik, brother of J.B. Patnaik's son-in-law, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik. It has been alleged that Priyabrata Patnaik has used the silver screen very effectively to settle political scores with his sworn enemy, the powerful finance, revenue and law minister of the state, Jugal Kishore Patnaik.

The central characters of the controversial film include a crusading bureaucrat—played by Priyabrata himself—and a corrupt minister named Ugrasen. The story revolves around how the determined bureaucrat finally corners the politician and arrests him. The film ends with the chief minister ordering his cabinet colleague to step down.

The theme is not unique. After all, the politician has been painted as a villain in

to the chief minister and insisted on the transfer of Priyabrata. A wily J.B. Patnaik did not ignore the minister's request but posted Priyabrata in Cuttack, the state's largest district.

What has further focused spotlight on Priyabrata's film is the childish action on the part of the collector of Balasore. At the instance of Jugal Kishore, the collector banned the screening of the film in all the theatre halls of the minister's home district.

There is yet another interesting twist to the present episode. The film has been released under the banner of Eastern Media Limited, a firm owned by the chief minister's son-in-law. Many believe that the film had the blessings of J.B. Patnaik, who would be only too happy to see Jugal Kishore Patnaik humiliated and exposed in public.

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

Justice denied

The Delhi police shields a man accused of torturing his wife

DELHI Are senior officials of the Delhi police shielding a man who has been accused of taking dowry, torturing his wife, and refused anticipatory bail by the Delhi sessions court on the ground that a *prima facie* case has been established against him? There is no other way to explain why Madan Mohan Gupta, the accused, has still not been arrested. According to his wife, Madhu, Gupta used to claim that he had high-level connections in the police and, it appears, they have stood him in good stead.

Madhu comes out of a respectable family in Rohtak, Haryana, and has 1st class MA and B.Ed degrees.

Her ordeal began following her marriage in April 1986 with Madan Mohan Gupta, an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, who was employed with NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development), in Bombay.

"The sad story of my life began on 6 April 1986, the day of my engagement to Gupta," Madhu told SUNDAY. "He demanded a dowry of Rs 3 lakhs, but my parents were in a position to spend only Rs 2.5 lakhs." According to Madhu, her mother-in-law had argued that considering her son had a degree from one of the best management schools in the country and was earning a handsome salary, he deserved a dowry of Rs 5 lakhs at least. The marriage was settled when Madhu's parents agreed to pay another Rs 1 lakh, and, though they wanted to keep the money as a fixed deposit in a bank in Madhu's name, her in-laws insisted that the amount be paid in cash. Consequently, her parents paid up on 20 April, the day of the *tika* ceremony.

But Madhu's in-laws were far from

being happy, despite the fact that her parents had given her daughter 20 *tolas* of gold jewellery, costly clothes, a whole range of kitchenware and household articles over and above the dowry in cash. Recalling her initial days in her "new home", Madhu said her in-laws began tormenting her by making sarcastic remarks and saying that her parents got away cheaply when even the humblest in society were giving VCRs, air-conditioners and scooters these days.

Madhu's parents say that they tried to mollify her in-laws by offering them additional sums of money and a set of gold bangles when they visited them for the first time after Madhu's marriage. This gesture quietened her in-laws for some time, but trouble started again at the time of Madhu's brother's wedding. Her in-laws would not let her travel to Delhi from Bombay, where she was

turned her out of the house with her daughter, retaining every immovable property that she had brought at the time of her marriage, including her university degrees and certificates.

Madhu's parents contacted some of her husband's relatives, requesting them to reason with him, but the efforts proved fruitless. Then, in sheer exasperation, Gaura Devi, Madhu's mother, wrote to the Prime Minister, about her daughter's plight. The letter was duly acknowledged by the Prime Minister's office, but no more.

Madhu was living with her parents for almost a year when her in-laws seemed to undergo a change of heart. They got in touch with her parents and expressed their desire to take Madhu back. "It was too good to be true. We soon realised that they had a sinister plan in their mind," said Gaura Devi.

Once Madhu was back with her husband, Gupta found a despicable way of tormenting her. He started writing letters to her parents and brothers that

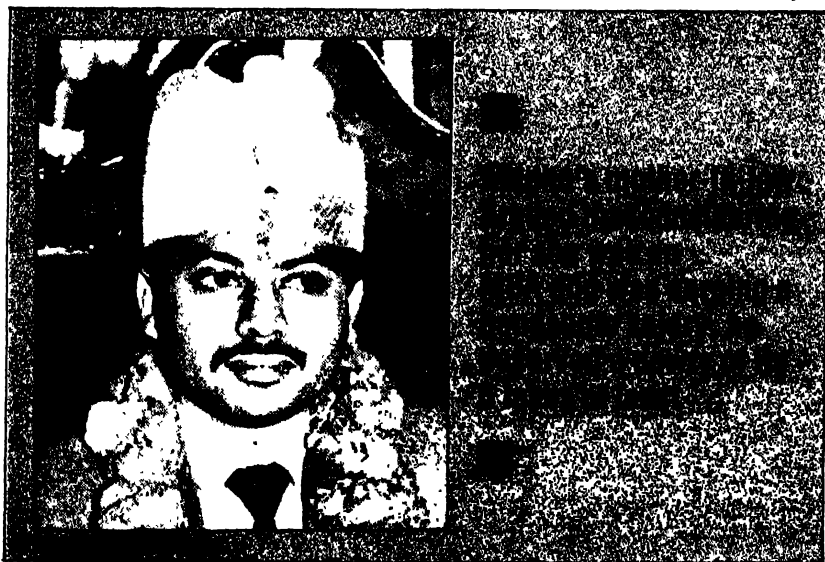
were filled with unprintable muck. In one of the milder ones, Gupta suggested to Madhu's father that he should take his wife and other female members of his family to G.B. Road (Delhi's red light area) in order to earn an extra bit. The sadistic part of this exercise was that Gupta would compel Madhu to read the letters he wrote.

Matters came to a head when Madhu's in-laws renewed their demand

for more money even when the last rites of Madhu's 23-year-old younger brother, who died suddenly in February this year, was being performed. Gupta created a scene by smashing window panes and breaking medicine bottles. Madhu's parents finally decided that they had had enough and lodged an FIR with the police.

Madhu's elder brother met Vijay Karan, the commissioner of police, Delhi, in March and he is said to have taken a personal interest in getting the case registered. But, for some strange and inexplicable reason, Gupta has been allowed to go scot-free when, normally, those accused in dowry cases are arrested within 24 hours.

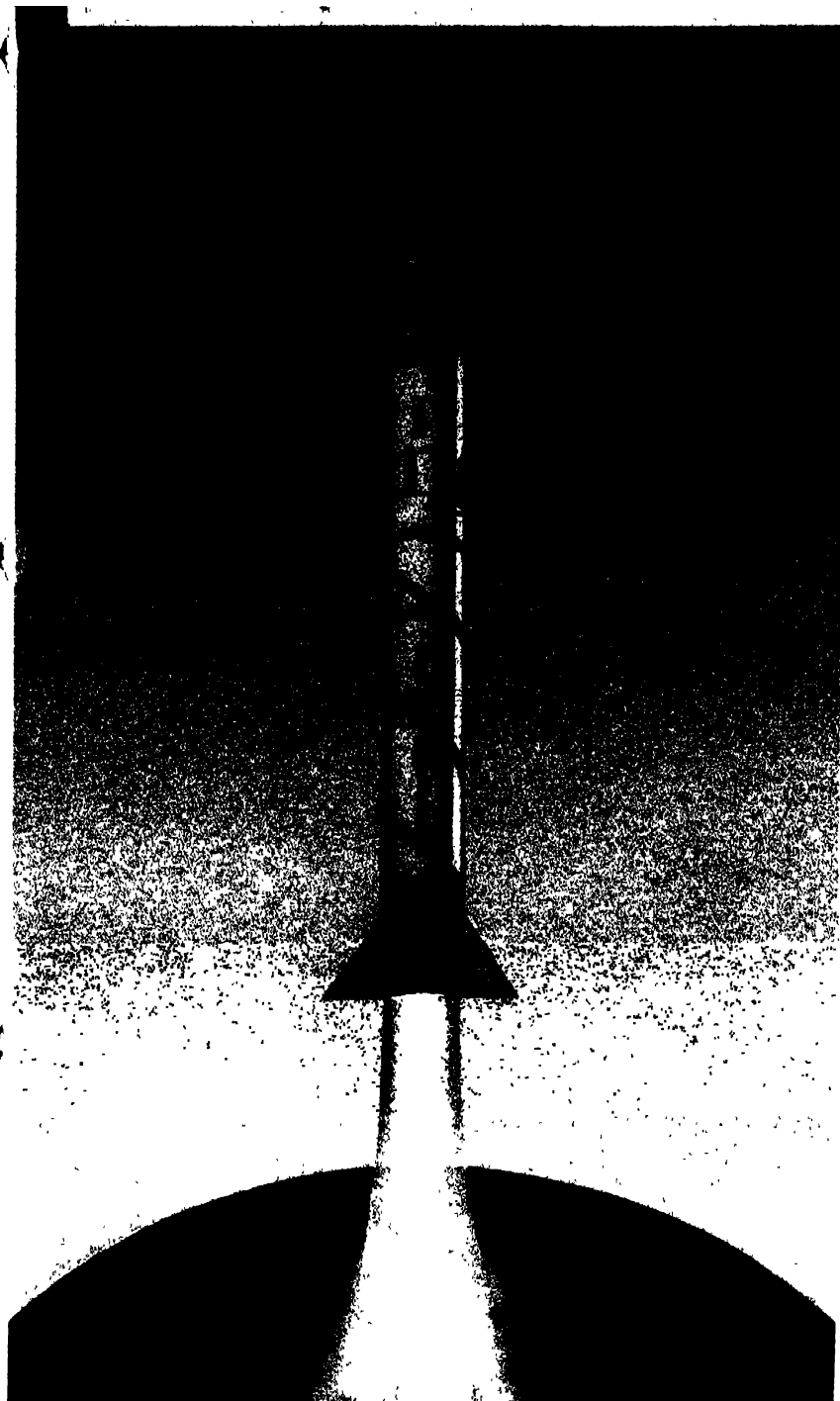
Alka Saxena / New Delhi



staying with her husband, until her parents also paid the to-and-fro air fare for four of her in-laws residing in Bombay.

"I bore it all with patience, hoping that they would mend their ways, but things started getting worse. They started abusing me and assaulting me even though I was pregnant," Madhu remembered with disgust. But the worst was still to come. In January 1987, she gave birth to a female child, and that seemed to seal her fate. "Not only did they (her in-laws) treat the child as unwelcome, but said the girl meant a liability of Rs 10 lakhs, which they wanted my parents to meet," she said.

When Madhu's parents declined to comply with this demand, her in-laws



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TRENDS

The suction attraction

Liposuction is fast becoming the favourite fat-removal technique



Too hungry to diet? Too lazy to jog? No problem. As long as you are not too poor to pay the doctor's fees, there is a quicker way. It's called liposuction and is fast replacing the old fashioned nose job as the newest status symbol in the knifestyles of the rich and famous. "You have nothing to lose but your fat," jokes Dr Narendra Pandya, the American trained plastic surgeon, who was the first in India to perform the operation.

Even in the West, this is a relatively new method of fat removal. It originated in 1976 with Professor Illuz of France, but gained acceptance only in 1982, when 14 plastic surgeons of the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery admitted in an official report that liposuction was a satisfactory

method of removing localised fat deposits.

The operation involves making a small, one cm cut in areas where the fat has to be removed, and then using rigid cannulas (hollow tubes) to break the fat, which is drawn out by suction pumps. Says Dr Pandya: "It requires a lot of force to break the fat and I have to rest after every ten minutes for at least five minutes, and for fifteen minutes after each operation. It is very exhausting."

But once the fat is removed, it stays off. At least, in the region where the operation was performed. For along with the deposits of fat, the fat cells are removed from the body too. It is estimated that in a liposuction operation, 60 per cent of the fat cells are sucked out and around 10 to 20 per cent of them are

destroyed. Also, there is a fair amount of scarring in and around the operated area, and further accumulation of fat cannot take place. The operation takes about half an hour to two hours depending on the amount of fat removed and the patient is discharged on either the same day, or if the operation is more complicated, after two days. Thereafter, the patient is required to wear a girdle for a minimum period of six weeks to get the desired contour in the operated area.

While the efficacy of the method is not in doubt, obese people cannot avail of it. Apparently, getting them into shape involves the suction of far too much fat and this can prove to be dangerous. Dr Pandya says: "We do not

the kind of figure you've always dreamt about but never thought you would possess.

Pandya dismisses all suggestions that liposuction leads to cancer, and has other dangerous side effects. Operations have been performed in America, he says, since the early Eighties, and there have been no problems. And people seem to believe him, going by the ever-increasing number who are resorting to this fat removal technique.

All the while, other cosmetic surgery continues alongside. Nose jobs are the commonest and Dr Pandya alone performs eight to ten such operations in a month. It is generally women between the ages of 18 to 25 who resort to such tinkering of facial structure, which may cost anything between Rs 3,000 to Rs 10,000. Older people, between 40 and 50 years generally, go in for face lifts, which consist basically of making an incision in the front of the ear, which extends around the ear lobe at the back, the skin, pulling it back and attaching it to the ear lobe, with the excess tissue being cut away. The same technique can be applied to get rid of ugly bags from under eyes. You can remove crows feet, frown lines, and double chins through cosmetic surgery and improve on Nature. Not unnaturally, it is women more than men who resort to such surgery.

And the thing women wish to improve most are their bust measurements. Silicone implants are used to make breasts look bigger, and are available in

twelve different sizes. Made from non-reactive silicon derivative (unlike the silicon used in silicon chips), such implants are imported and normally cost \$350. The total operation could cost Rs 15,000 and may well last for two and a half hours.

Pandya, who is one of the two plastic surgeons in Asia who are members of the elite American Society For Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, says that it is difficult to gauge success in his profession. "It all depends on the expectation of the patient and what plastic surgery can do. If there is a disparity between the two there will always be dissatisfaction and unhappiness. It is the duty of the surgeon, therefore, to make the person realistic in his expectation. Then there is very little room for unhappiness."

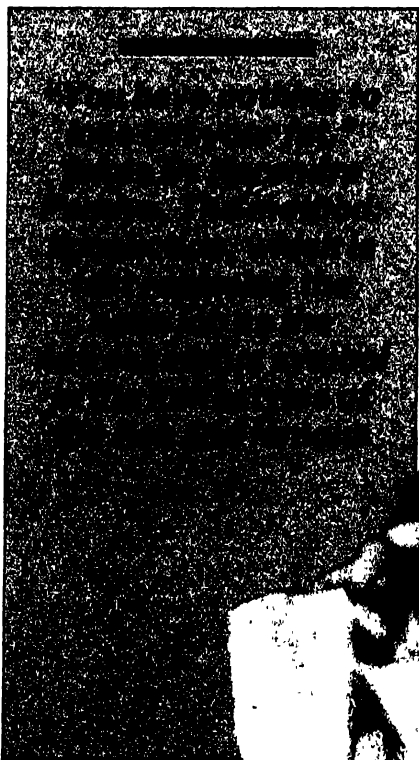
But human vanity cannot be denied. And the patients keep lining up, snapshots of favourite film stars in hand, asking to be transformed into *femme fatales*. And Narendra Pandya, like all plastic surgeons everywhere, tries to make their dreams come true.

Olga Tellis/Bombay

A liposuction operation being performed: a quick way to becoming slim

advise taking out more than three kgs of fat at one time. And if more than that is removed then we give blood transfusion during the operation. In all about 3,000 ccs of fat can be taken out and this includes the blood which comes with it."

Liposuction then, is for such people as want to remove tenacious deposits of fat, which refuse to go away despite exercising and rigorous dieting. And the method can be applied at the stomach, thighs, the folds above the waist, between the hips and the thighs, knees and even at the chin. So for a price—which varies from Rs 4,000 to Rs 10,000 depending on the kind of hospital you book yourself into—you can get yourself



Face the facts



Why is the CAG report on Bofors being withheld?

KULDIP NAYAR

The comptroller and auditor general of India (CAG), T. N. Chaturvedi, whose report on the Bofors gun deal has been withheld by the Rajiv Gandhi government from Parliament, is a disillusioned person. He signed the report on 15 April and sent many copies, instead of the usual five, to the ministries of finance and defence, and one to the President. But the Lok Sabha, which was in session for three weeks after this, was not presented with the report.

Tabling reports of the auditor general before each House of Parliament is a constitutional obligation (Article 151). He has to submit them to the President, who "shall cause them to be laid" before Parliament (or the Governor in matters relating to the states).

This is to be done "within reasonable time", as is clear from the Constituent Assembly debate. Even where no time limit was indicated, said B. R. Ambedkar, the law minister when the Constitution was framed, a report should be placed before Parliament "within reasonable time".

Chaturvedi will not discuss the contents of the report on the Bofors gun deal. But he makes no secret of the fact that everything included in the report, part by part and later the full report, was sent to the defence ministry, which authenticated the report. The questions asked and replies given are there. The observations of the ministry are also in the report.

Then why is the government reluctant to place the report before Parliament? Chaturvedi says that he cannot speculate on the reasons for this because by doing so he would be traversing the delicate ground of politics. He wants the public to judge. "I have drawn every bit of information from the files," says Chaturvedi, adding, "but the conclusions are mine."

"I had no IB or CBI to assist me, no investigating

agency, of course," says Chaturvedi. Incidentally, the Joint Parliamentary Committee headed by B. Shankaranand, which whitewashed the whole thing, had the support of the investigating and other agencies.

THE CAG report, culling the material mostly from the defence ministry's files, has built an effective case of misuse of funds and authority. Chaturvedi could not probably go to the logical end to put the blame where it belongs, but the report leaves no doubt about the kickbacks and goes behind the facade of foreign companies which were used to hide the identities of the beneficiaries.

I have no doubt that the report will one day constitute the basis for a commission to look into corruption by today's rulers; Chaturvedi has done a great job in reconstructing the deal, step by step.

It is difficult to say when the government will table the report before Parliament—if at all it does so—because the Rajiv Gandhi regime is hamstrung by the effects it might have on its electoral prospects. There are reports that Chaturvedi may be pressed to revise his report or withhold certain portions of it, but he is not a person who would oblige the government. As far as he is concerned, he has submitted the report to the President and fulfilled his constitutional obligation; the rest is up to the government.

The report on the Bofors gun scandal, Chaturvedi believes, has evoked attention because the government has withheld it. There have been earlier reports on other matters which have been critical of the government. Otherwise "no one cares for what is said in a report", says Chaturvedi, who has been occupying the CAG post for five years now. He has given reports on various subjects like autonomous bodies, the desert development programme, National Cooperative Consumers' Federation, state electricity boards, and public sector enterprises. But he finds "deliberate neglect" of the reports and "some sort of callousness" in acting on them on the part of those who run public affairs.

Chaturvedi, now completing 35 years in the IAS, does not want to say why things went wrong and from which period. But he sees a gradual decline in the quality of administration. And what has shocked him most is that corruption, which has seeped into every facet of life, does not bother anyone; "it is open and everyone takes it in his or her stride."

THE BOFORS gun scandal is only one symptom of a disease which is serious. But Chaturvedi does not want to make any comment, at least

not until after retirement, which is due on 23 March next year. He is happy that the auditor general is not eligible to be appointed to any other office, under the central or state government, after retirement.

Who is to blame—the system or the rulers? Chaturvedi does not enter into any discussion. But if democracy has to have any meaning, both institutions and conventions would have to be respected. How does one ensure that those who are supposed to run the institutions and follow the conventions—politicians and bureaucrats—do not distort them for their own ends? I did not dwell on these points with Chaturvedi, who wanted to concentrate on procedural matters. ■

The CAG report on Bofors has built an effective case of misuse of funds and authority. Chaturvedi probably could not go to the logical end to put the blame where it belongs, but the report leaves no doubt about the kickbacks

The politician as POET

*Inside every big-shot politician, there's a small-time poet
struggling to get out*

*At this early hour in Pindi, birds haven't
called
But the farewell tune is only a few
moments away.
There's no one to see me now
Those who have indicted me are asleep,
Waiting for daybreak to rejoice at the
morning news.*

All right. It's not quite T.S. Eliot. But then, did Eliot have to run the commerce ministry, fight A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury and be humiliated by Jyoti Basu at every election? Considering the pressures they work under, Indian politicians—such as Priya Ranjan Das Munshi who penned the above lines—manage to churn out quite reasonable poetry.

But why poetry? Nobody seems to know, even though one thing is clear: India has the largest number of poet-politicians in the world. These range from V.P. Singh, the Opposition's Prime Minister-in-waiting, who never tires of suggesting that under that regal personage, there lies the soul of a poet, to Subash Ghisingh, the firebrand Gorkha leader whose poetry is on a par with his politics. There's Bhagwat Jha, the former chief minister of Bihar, who has added Azad, the pseudonym under which he writes his poetry, to his name. And there's even Vithalbhai Patel, a Madhya Pradesh politician whose claim to fame is that he wrote the lyrics to a hit song from Raj Kapoor's *Bobby* (*Jhoot bole, kauva kaate*).

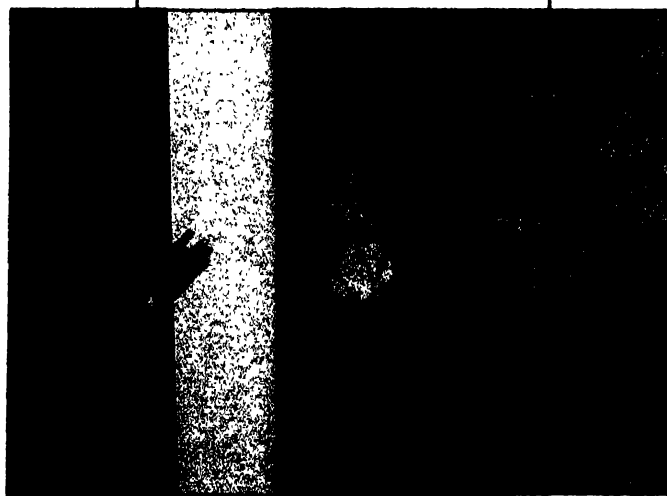
Some of India's poet-politicians have their prowess advertised. Since the time the Jan Sangh/BJP launched Atal Behari Vajpayee as their national alternative, his close relationship with the Muse has been much promoted. The man himself is more modest: "I consider myself more a writer of prose than a poet."

Others base their fame on their verse. Who would have heard of Balkavi Bairagi, an MP from Mandsaur, had he not taken on the role of official parliamentary

poet? Mani Shankar Aiyar, the Prime Minister's quip-a-minute aide, is known less as Rajiv's PR (Panchayati Raj not public relations) man, and more as the Rod McKuen of the PMO. And then there are the prolific versifiers such as Dr Karan Singh, India's ambassador designate to the USA, who regard their poetry as proof of the fact that a lifetime of politicking hasn't brutalised their souls completely.

Never mind the hate-mongering that goes on in Indian politics; love is an abiding interest of our poet-politicians.

Karan Singh: inspired by scenic beauty



**But why poetry?
Nobody seems to
know why, but India
has the largest
number of
poet-politicians**

It may be a poem to a first girlfriend, or an ode to the country, or an elegy on the death of a much-admired fellow statesman, or even a sonnet on the beauty of Nature: it is love, of different kinds and for varied things, that inspires this breed.

With Atal Behari Vajpayee, for instance, it is love for the motherland. The BJP leader, who "inherited the love and ability for poetry" from his father (so much for criticism of dynastic politics), began writing around the time when the British were lordling it over India. Deeply upset at this *gulami* (slavery), Vajpayee dashed off a spate of poems asking the Brits to scoot, and hectoring his countrymen into assisting them on their way. Independence came finally; how far Atal Behari's poetic effort helped remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of Indian politics.

Be that as it may, Vajpayee's love for

Bharatvarsha persists, and his poems continue to express anguish about its state of being. In recent times Punjab has come in for special attention:

Doodh me daraar pad gaye!
Khoon kyon safed ho gaya?
Bhedh me abhedh kho gaya!
Bant gaye shaheed,
Geet kat gaye.
Kaleje me katar gad gaye!
Doodh me daraar pad gaye!!
 (The milk of human kindness has been destroyed.
 People have become cowards.
 Unity has become the first casualty
 Martyrs have been divided between communities
 Songs lie unfinished,
 And a dagger has been embedded in one's heart!

It isn't surprising that the former Yuvraj of Jammu and Kashmir was goaded into poetry by the love of Nature. Dr Karan Singh maintains that it is "the beauty of the natural environment I am in that inspires me to write". And not necessarily on scenic wonders, either. The former Union minister has written on as diverse subjects as the passing away of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru:

Now you are gone to join the ranks of those
 whose names will live in every heart
 with joyous fragrance, like the budding rose
 that was of you so intimate a part
 And then there is meaningless juvenilia,
 presumably addressed to his beloved:

Whatever else you do
 please don't look at me
 that way,
 it's really quite disastrous,
 my heart turns soft,
 my stomach hard,
 my head around,
 if only your eyelashes
 were shorter
 it wouldn't be so bad,
 or your eyes dimmer
 or my love weaker.

Mani Shankar Aiyar's best poetry ("not that there's much of it") was brought on by the mid-life crisis. Aiyar, who wryly confesses to having been the "poorest boy in the richest school (Doon) in the country", went through early life fuming inwardly at the injustice of it all. That his friends' mothers "went to clubs in chauffeur-driven cars" and that their fathers had "sniff-



(Clockwise from above) Priya Ranjan Das Munshi: obsession with death; A.B. Vajpayee: patriotic fervour; Mani Shankar Aiyar: a poet in the PMO; Balkavi Bairagi: 'automatic' writing



air-conditioning", while he had to hide from them "the shameful truth of school uniforms worn even in the holidays", and the "ultimate humiliation of journeys undertaken in second-class compartments".

So, Mani plotted revolution, swore by Marx ("no, never by God") and then found himself in the Indian Foreign Service, where he lived out the ultimate bourgeois dream of a palatial house, an air-conditioned car and a bevy of proper-

ly subservient servants fussing around him. Until one day he began to reflect on what he had become. Result: poetry.

I have become that
 Which I greatly envied...
 Well, I have grown now,
 Into an ample middle age.
 My pot-belly is transported
 By a liveried attendant
 to a cunningly designed chair...
 But I comfort myself.
 I can always

Turn my back on it,
 And none can then say
 "Sour grapes!"

Then there is the prophet of automatic writing: Balkavi Bairagi, who proclaims loud and clear that he doesn't write poetry; it writes itself. And if there is any conscious thought involved then the result, whatever else it may be, is not poetry. So Bairagi effortlessly knocks off poems: on the patriotic Indian soldier, on the beauty of the Malwa landscape, on the value of optimism in life, on the state of the country — there really is no denying his versatility.

Lesser mortals may send out custom-made greeting cards on the New Year and Diwali. Nöt Bairagi. He sends good wishes in verse:

Ho sake to de badhaye
jiyoti ke aadarsh ko
Subhkamanaye de jeyega

She said 'You have a lovely face'

I said 'It only shares your grace'
She said 'Your eyes are dark and deep'
I said 'Your images they keep'
She said 'Your gaze is full of bliss'
I said 'The rapture of your kiss'
She said 'Your arms are bands of steel'

I said 'Your silhouette they feel'
She said 'Why do you love me so'
I said 'That I will never know'.

—FROM TÊTE-À-TÊTE BY KARAN SINGH



deep ke sangharsh ko
(If possible, congratulate the principle of light give good wishes to the struggle of the lamp.)

Death seems to be the primary obsession of Priya Ranjan Das Munshi (maybe that explains why much of his politics appears to be inspired by some kind of death wish). Not only does the commerce minister write about it at the drop of the proverbial hat, he pens elegies on the demise of fellow politicians too. Perhaps the most famous of these efforts is the poem on the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, which Das Munshi had couriered to the Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, through the kind offices of Union minister K. Natwar Singh at the recent SAARC meet in Islamabad. Wrote Das Munshi:

*Eto phanshir mancha noi.
A Pakistaner nutan jeevan
garar jeevanbedi.
Nutan kore sabuj nishaner
deshe Ramzaner chand
dekhar aage
Aamader shabar brata
palan hobe.
These are not the
gallows...
But the foundation stone
for a new Pakistan.
Before sighting the
Ramzan moon, we will
take our vows in the
country of the green flag.*

This death obsession places Das Munshi in the unlikely company of Atal Behari Vajpayee. But the latter's preoccupation with it is far more understandable. The BJP leader has not been enjoying good health of late, and, in fact, underwent a major operation in America some time back. It was in the States that Vajpayee wrote:

*Maut se than gaye!
Joonjhne ka mera koi irada na tha,
Mod par melenge iska vada na tha;*

Everything seems lost.
*We have lost sight of the present
In our preoccupation with the future
and the past.
Standing on guard has served no
purpose
The jug of nectar has run out anyway.
This preoccupation with profit and
loss
has made a business out of life
Those who are willing to be sold are
valued.*

—FROM *JEEVAN BEET CHALA* BY ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE

*Raasta rok kar veh khade ho gaye,
You lage zindagi me badi go gaye;
(I am battling with death!
Though I had no intentions of
struggling
There was no promise that we would
meet at the corner
She stood there barring my way
Seeming bigger than life itself.)*

To begin at the beginning: how did these politicians become poets? While some like Vajpayee inherited the talent, Bairagi was, apparently, a poetic prodigy from early childhood (hence the name Balkavi: child poet). With Dr Karan Singh it came with the general facility for language, and Priya Ranjan, well, it would be matter for wonder if someone educated in the environs of College Street in Calcutta didn't try his hand at poetry.

But perhaps the most interesting story about the making of a poet is related by Mani Shankar Aiyar. It happened like this. Aiyar was at Cambridge and had made a new acquisition: of that rare species (at least for a young Indian boy educated in Doon) called a girlfriend. *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* had done their work, and Mani was all set to play God: improve the young woman's mind and make her fit for his superior love. Only the lady had other ideas and refused to be Doolittled. Much to our *desi* Higgins' exasperation:

*But you were you
And I a god,
Creating you with words,*

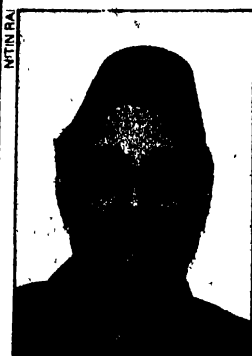
*And when they failed,
with kisses
To no avail.*

And then there is the fact of pain. Atal Behari's best poetry came at a time when he was battling for life in an American hospital, and Aiyar's poem on the death of his brother (who committed suicide) was a way of getting over the tragedy:

*But I have known fear
In the sudden
apprehension of mortality
Fear in deliberated death:
the irreversible decision
Of the irrevocable
moment
An eternity of exile in a
moment of escape.*

Politics and poetry don't always mix. Ask Priya Ranjan Das Munshi. The Congressman has often got on the wrong side of the party because of his poeticising.

A ROLL-CALL OF POET-POLITICIANS

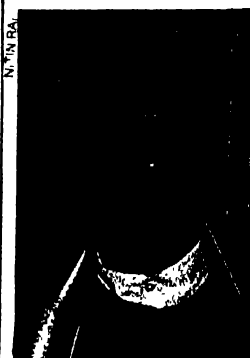


Karan Singh

• Quality is a little dubious ("The pain knifing through one like the A-bomb through Hiroshima." Ouch!), but the new ambassador to Washington means well. He even published a book of English poems in 1962.

Atal Behari Vajpayee

• He began writing poetry in early childhood, only to give it up for a career in journalism. These days, he contents himself writing a poem on every birthday, all of which reflect the transience of life.

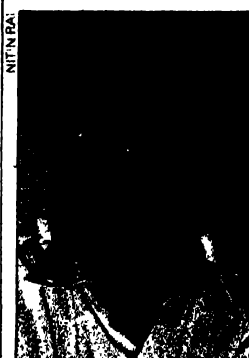


Priya Ranjan Das Munshi

• His style, alas, owes more to Pritish Nandy than Rabindranath Tagore, but the diminutive Bengali politician dashes off verses whenever he is moved. A poem on Bhutto's hanging won praise from Benazir.

Mani Shankar Aiyar

• His poetry skills have won mention in the English press (well, *Private Eye* at any rate) and, despite his Doon School background, many deal with women. Rajiv is said to like his joint secretary's limericks.



Balkavi Bairagi

• The Lok Sabha MP from Mandsaur is known more for his witty (and poetic) repartee in the House than for any political skill. But you can't fault him on his prolificity: he has published no less than 23 books of poems.

Take the time he wrote an elegy on Promode Dasgupta, the chairman of the Left Front committee and a prominent Bengali Marxist. The poem was recited by Das Munshi in meetings held to condole Dasgupta's death, with much appreciative praise of the communist leader's love and concern for the poor and his work towards improving their lot. The Congress was not amused.

Priya Ranjan also chooses to play down the poetry he wrote during the Emergency. It's difficult though: for some of the poems (around six or seven) were published. Das Munshi explains: "I wrote that because I felt that way. I don't believe in feeling one way and writing (in) another. Political alignments don't matter when I write poetry."

The Emergency provoked the creation of another poet: Atal Behari Vajpayee. After a long lay-off ("Politics doesn't allow enough time for poetry") the BJP leader was visited by the Muse again, this time in jail. The poems were compiled into a book a year after the Emergency ended.

Balkavi Bairagi, though, maintains: "Politics only excites, provokes. It doesn't inspire." Nevertheless, Bairagi, the career politician, seems to be managing fine, with numerous books of poetry to his credit.

It is Mani Shankar Aiyar, however,

Girls are so lucky
They seem to know from birth
'Tis all the same.

Perhaps they learn it
from their mothers.
Who keep it hidden from their brothers.

But for us,
We sons of fathers' fathers
The anguish starts with photographs
Smudged, cached between the pages
Of the school atlas
And passed in furtive wonder
From lap to lap.
Drawings etched on bathroom walls
And sniggers that catch an ache.

—FROM FIDELITY BY MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

Bhagwat Jha Azad

He may be better known as the man who didn't last long as the chief minister of Bihar and who fathered cricketer Kirti Azad, but Bhagwat Jha takes poetry seriously enough to add the *non plume* Azad to his name.

**V.P. Singh**

• Ask the Raja of Manda what he really enjoys and he'll tell you that it is not politics but poetry. While the quality of his output is a subject of some controversy, V.P. Singh actively seeks out the company of poets in his native UP.

**Amitabh Bachchan**

• His father is one of India's greatest living Hindi poets (*Madhushala* has just reappeared in a Penguin translation), but the lanky superstar is clearly not in that class. However, he writes his own stuff.

**Jayaprakash Narayan**

• The leader of the Total Revolution movement, which led Indira Gandhi to declare a state of Emergency, his political fervour found expression in poetry too. He died a disillusioned man though.

**Subash Ghisingh**

• After proving a non-success in the army, the GNLF leader decided to try his hand at poetry. And his facility for verse came in quite useful during the campaign for the creation of a separate state with Ghisingh quoting his poems.

Comrade Ho said, "You have to fight."
So we were ready in towns and villages with the
sound of the siren.
The eyes of the fat American generals were
burning
coal-black or flaming in revenge...
We replied with our hands on the barrel.

Comrade Ho said, "You've got to die."
So everyone from old lady Diang to young
Shanuthin
waited in the frontline,
in paddy-fields, marshy lands, huts and
maternity rooms.

Stealthily, like thieves, tearing the dark night to
pieces.

Those red-faced soldiers threw their bombs.

—FROM *COMRADE HO ZINDABAD* BY PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSHI

who has put his talents to best use at the PMO. The principal speech-writer of the Prime Minister, Aiyar now expends his considerable poetic gift in translating works of prominent Indian writers for Rajiv's public speeches. So, when Gandhi takes off for Tamil Nadu, Aiyar scurries for the nearest book of Subramaniam Bharati's poems, transliterates them with what he calls "a great deal of poetic licence", and incorporates the stuff into Rajiv's speeches. And then, while P. Chidambaram belts out the authentic Tamil stuff in his Harvard-returned voice, Gandhi makes do with Mani's version, delivered in his best "Hume dekhna hai" style. If it's Pakistan, it must be Iqbal. And in the Mauritius, it's back to dependable Bharati — this time his poem on indentured sugar plantation labour.

And so they write on. Vajpayee pens a poem on his pet dog Bubblee, who got lost one Diwali; Balkavi Bairagi talks about the change of seasons, drawing (occasionally far-fetched) parallels with life itself. Mani Shankar Aiyar brushes up his Urdu to have a bash at translating yet another Pakistani poet; Priya Ranjan Das Munshi takes a line or two from Tagore and dashes off a versified commentary. And, Dr Karan Singh is, in all probability, re-reading Ezra Pound for inspiration, this very minute.

Seema Goswami/New Delhi

A novel success

Gita Mehta makes it big in the Western literary circuit

The way Gita Mehta tells it, it all began at a cocktail party in New York. A stranger came up, grabbed her by the arm and said to those gathered around: "Here's the girl who can tell you what *karma* is all about." "Well, *karma* isn't what it is cracked up to be," was her laconic reply. The stranger turned out to be the chairman of Bantam Books and he went on to invite her to write one on it. She did and it took her all of three weeks.

Karma Cola: Marketing The Mystic East—a series of wicked and funny essays on the fallibilities of *gurus*, godmen, hippies and conmen—was a runaway success. Mehta's send up earned her the reputation of a writer with an earthy, irreverent, idiosyncratic style; the title 'scourge of the *dharma* bums' and a place in the Western literary circuit. The book sold a quarter of a million copies, came very easily off the typewriter and even "made her laugh a lot" while she worked on it.

That was ten years ago. Her next book—the novel *Raj*—took eight years of hard work. If it took this long, it was because Mehta set about writing another send up on the lines of *Karma Cola*. "I had intended to write a satirical work, about the extra-

vagant lifestyles of the maharajas, their Rolls Royces and their fantastic funerals." But as she began working, she decided to do something more serious. And this meant years of researching India's colonial history, the lives of maharajas and the National Movement.

For a first work of fiction, *Raj*—which was published earlier this year—has been a heady success. It was placed on the bestseller list of the *Chicago Tribune*, has been hailed by novelist Mario Puzo and feminist Germaine Greer and received a good review in the prestigious *New York Review of Books*. In Britain—where Mehta spends a few months every year—the book was hailed as an important work of historical fiction. "I thought they (the publishers)

would be scared by the awful lot of history in it," she says.

They weren't. Johnathan Cape, her English publisher, managed to sell the translation rights of the novel to many European publishers. It is known in France as *La Maharani* and in Germany as *Die Maharani*, where it stayed about five months on the bestseller list.

Mehta's "awful lot of history" stretches from the period between Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee and the decision to abolish the privy purses. The novel addresses the reader through the thoughts and life of a Rajput princess called Jaya. The princess of Balmer, Jaya, is married to the Prince of Sirpur, in Tripura. This takes her away from the sweltering heat of the Rajasthan desert to the fertile land of the Brahmaputra. Jaya, who has lived a sheltered life, is trained to become savvy and western-

nised so that she can be more attractive to her husband.

When her husband meets with an untimely death, she becomes the ruler of Sirpur and at the end of the book, contests as an Independent candidate from there. The volatile years of Indian nationalism and the struggle for freedom are related in a matter-of-fact manner—without sympathy for either the nationalists

nationalists (who are sometimes portrayed as upper class men who learnt their politics at the Inner Temple—products of an alien culture). On the face of it, this may appear as an apolitical attitude, but it stems from Mehta's own perceptions of how India's colonial history has been written. She believes that while the British historians were full of prejudice, nationalist history has either been uncritical or lapsed into sentimentality. Says the author: "By doing so, they have left out the ambiguities of the situation and the ambivalent attitudes that existed then."

Yet, *Raj* is a typical Raj novel in one important respect. There are descriptions of the courts of princes, the goings-on inside their harems and exotic rituals. Says critic Jonathan Raban of her style, "She can bring a scene alive with just a few strokes and a dab of colour."

The trick in fiction writing, Mehta says, is to "get the reader to suspend disbelief". *Raj*, despite the extravagant descriptions of life in royal India, seems to have done just that

or the English.

Researching the book wasn't easy. Mehta spent a lot of time meeting royalty, listening to their reminiscences and taking copious notes. It also meant many hours in the well-stocked archives of the India Office and the libraries in London, and watching old film footage of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee and the Dandi march. She met the Rajmata of Jaipur who allowed her to examine her grandfather's diaries and the Rajmata of Tehri Garwhal, who, like her heroine Jaya, had first thrown off her veil when she filed her papers for an election.

Raj literature usually takes sides. But Mehta's *Raj* makes no case for the Indian royalty, the British or the



The metaphor from painting is perhaps appropriate, for the descriptions in the *Raj* have a strong visual appeal. Replies Mehta, "I have always been accused of writing pictorially. I think there is a new snobbism which goes: if it is not difficult, it is not good. I think the work of a writer is to do all the hard work and pass this on to the reader."

A political or not, Mehta has a very definite political pedigree. Her father is the Janata Dal's Biju Patnaik,



Raj, La Maharani and Die Maharani: runaway success; (below) Gita Mehta: penning bestsellers



her grandfather campaigned against the caste system and *sati*, an uncle was shot dead in the Chittagong armoury raid and another was sent by the British to the Cellular Jail in the Andamans when he was only 14.

Mehta, of course, grew up in a different political atmosphere. At 46, she is a midnight's child, a member of India's first post-colonial generation. She studied at various convents before graduating from Bombay University. From there she went to Cambridge, where she did a second degree in English literature ("the easiest thing to study") at Girton.

It was at Cambridge that she met the man who would become her husband—Sonny Mehta, now president of Knopf, the prestigious New York publishing house. Among her good friends in the university were writer Clive James and Germaine Greer, who described Mehta as "one of the most (indeed the only) fascinating women in Cambridge."

Mehta returned to teach at Bombay University but, bored by academics, returned to London and Sonny. She studied filmmaking and went on to make documentaries for BBC and ITV. Eventually, she became a war correspondent for NBC in the US, where she was part of a team that won an Emmy award for its work on Bangladesh. Now she divides her time between New York, London and India. Her 22-year-old son, Aditya, studies in Britain at Edinburgh University.

With *Raj*, Mehta has arrived. It was not easy. Apart from the time spent on research, writing fiction, she says, doesn't come easily to her. "It is difficult. When you're writing non-fiction, there's a point below which you cannot fall, since the facts give you a safety net," she says. Nevertheless, the trick in fiction writing, Mehta says, is to "get the reader to suspend disbelief". Mehta, despite the extravagant descriptions of life in royal India, seems to have done just that.

Shrabani Basu/London

When video spells votes

Politicians discover the power of closed-circuit TV

Devi Lal tried it first, and emerged a winner. Rajiv Gandhi tried to emulate the feat, and came a cropper.

The fleet of sleek video-raths, fitted with giant 100-inch screens, which followed the Jat supremo from village to village during the 1987 poll campaign in Haryana, informed, enchanted and enthralled the masses. Hundreds gathered around the vans, not only to see the 'star', but also themselves. It was a novelty and the amazing sweep for the Haryana Sangharsh Samiti led the organisers of these video *melas* to proclaim that it was the hi-tech campaign that had brought about the miracle. Came the Tamil Nadu elections, and Rajiv's campaign managers tried to package "Rajiv anna" the same way, but the video magic simply did not work and the DMK swept the polls.

But the idea has caught on. Video is becoming an integral part of political communication in India today. And 'me-too' video films are the rage of the day.

In Gorakhpur, the infamous Virendra Pratap Shahi is seriously toying with the idea of making video cassettes of a debut-making film, *Karishma Kismat Ka*, in case the film is not released commercially before the elections. In the film, Shahi, whose name still strikes terror in the hearts of the people and which is a permanent fixture in police files, plays the "good guy". He is a *zamindar*, but not the archetypal oppressor. Shahi plays Robin Hood, helping the poor and taking on the rich and powerful. A role tailor-made to suit the political message he chooses to convey, courtesy a producer friend. Video cassettes of the film will be shown throughout his constituency on poll eve, the MLA confided.

Dr J.K. Jain, the man who persuaded Devi Lal to use his 'video-raths' for his campaign in 1987, asserts that the hi-tech media strategy gives a poll campaign an "extra winning edge". In his Video on Wheels office in Delhi, a team of enthusiastic men and women, who were busy doing medical

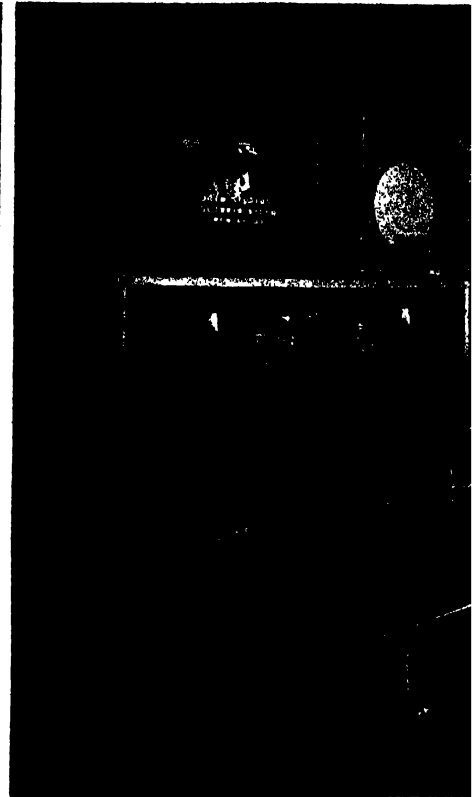
video films earlier, currently 'package' political leaders, parties and even god-men. To what extent the selling of Devi Lal through the use of traditional folk motifs, songs, dances, colour and spectacle on giant video screens contributed to poll victory is a matter of debate, but Jain's video magic has found more and more customers. Dr Jain asserts that the video-raths helped out-gun Doordarshan propaganda and reached remote corners in Haryana which are not accessed by television.

During the Chhaprauli elections in Uttar Pradesh, Ajit Singh's campaign was extensively video-filmed. In a promotional clip of Jain Studios, entitled "Making of a chief minister", sequences from Singh's campaign are incorporated to show how the heir of the Charan Singh 'legacy' was 'packaged'.

The camera zooms on to a smiling, kurta-clad Ajit Singh as voices in the background chant "*kisanonke neta Ajit Singh, pattharme phul khilaenge...*" There are shots of large crowds gathered to hear the "leader" on whose shoulders the mantle of Charan Singh had fallen, and then there is the victory march, and more footage of a smiling Ajit Singh. The commentator in the back-



Where Doordarshan does not reach, Dr J.K. Jain's video-raths do. More and more politicians are using film clips of themselves to woo the electorate in remote rural areas



ground goes on to tell prospective buyers, "Political use of video is being actively considered by NTR and other Opposition leaders."

The promotional film has several clips of Rajiv Gandhi's Tamil Nadu campaign—25 video *raths* fanned out in the state with each *rath* having more than ten shows during the poll. The Prime Minister, who had personally campaigned, is packaged as "Rajiv anna", the loving big brother. Archival clips of the Mahatma with Nehru, Nehru with Mrs Gandhi, and then the emotional climax—a sad, forlorn Rajiv watching the last remains of his mother's body going up in smoke—are juxtaposed with the Prime Minister waving out to a cheering crowd. Shots of electronic posters, psychedelic symbolism are woven in with traditional motifs like a young girl performing Bharat Natyam against the backdrop of a giant cutout of the Prime Minister. But though the kaleidoscopic brilliance of the latest video technology failed to do the trick for Rajiv, Dr Jain's boys vehemently assert that the hi-tech media strategy resulted in a larger number of votes for the Congress party compared to previous years. The promotional film has local Congress leaders commenting before the camera that their "only regret is that the video *raths* were deployed for seven days" and the "video is better than public meetings". The Congress in-



Video films in the making at Jain Studios: the latest in political communication

powerful print media, having missed out on the rally proper, was shown the entire film, as a way of displaying the politician's popularity.

The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (RSS) are the latest entrants to the video games. The Jain studios are currently putting together sequences from various rallies held at Raipur and Bilaspur and addressed by BJP heavyweights like Atal Behari Vajpayee, Rajmata Scindia and L.K. Advani. The BJP rally at

creased its tally of votes by four per cent over the last elections, so the media strategy was right, is the implicit message. The defeat at the hustings, according to the commentators, was because the Congress decided to go it alone, and the hi-tech publicity campaign was used at the last moment.

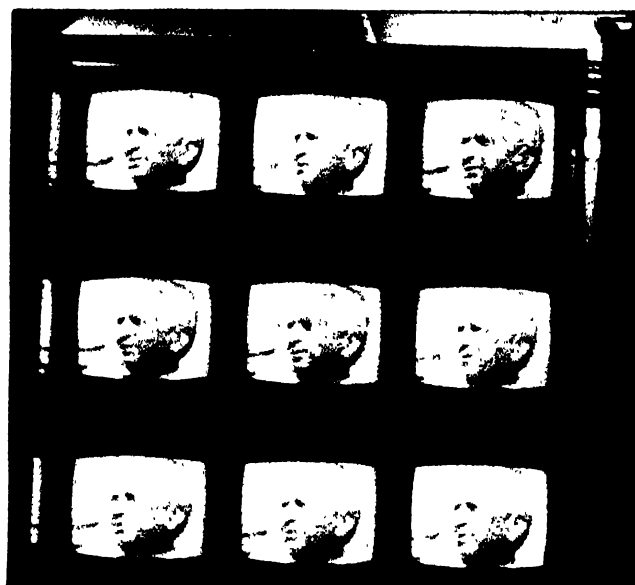


Devi Lal's hi-tech poll campaign of 1987 (above) which swept him to power was the brainchild of Dr J.K. Jain (left)

Though Devi Lal pioneered the systematic use of video in a poll campaign in the country, he apparently finds the current craze among politicians of all hues to have their rallies video-filmed extremely amusing. Sanjit Singh, the recently recruited dapper press secretary to the Haryana CM, recounts how the Jat supremo regales his band of admirers with his favourite saying, "Whatever I do, others love to copy." Devi Lal, in a grand stroke, waived loans for farmers in his state. Others are trying to follow suit. The same applies for the political use of video. Sanjit Singh smugly observes, "The Congress we hear, is going to use videos on a large scale in the coming elections. They need to. Rajiv Gandhi is a man with no mass contact, and therefore the massive dependence on the idiot box or the video. Our leader, Devi Lal, is a man of the masses, people see him regularly, his rallies are a dialogue

between him and the people, so there is really no need for video for image-building." Why then are his rallies video-filmed? Singh says that it is done more as a "reference". Another close Devi Lal aide asserts that it is the local Janata Dal units who get in touch with a video cameraman whenever the "leader" (Devi Lal) is addressing a rally. The video cassettes are subsequently used as "fillers", to keep a restless audience in check, when lesser beings are speaking. People flock around video screens, not only to see the political stars, but also themselves, and that is a major reason for the medium's crowd-pulling capacity.

Of late politicians have found uses for video, other than directly appealing to the voters. A senior Janata Dal leader videotaped a public rally in Uttar Pradesh that 'starred' him. Delhi's



Raipur in the Chattisgarh region was packaged in a sequence which had the speeches of the party's national leaders and colourful dances by *adivasis* of the area. A song "*Har haath ko denge kam/har khetko denge paani*" plays in the background as the party's orange and green flags flutter on screen and the camera zooms on to the lotus—the BJP symbol. Shots of the Bofors gun, of newspaper cuttings on Arjun Singh's resignation following the Churhat lottery scandal are interpolated to drive home the party's message about its rival Congress(I). Jain's cameramen have also video-recorded the celebrations of Dr Hedgewar's centenary for the RSS.

The video, like any visual medium, can be a double-edged sword for the politician as well. Just as photographs with criminals regularly embarrass politicians, so can a video tape. Perhaps, not many of the politicians who attended high-flying godman Chandra Swami's birthday party—among them Subramaniam Swamy, H.D. Deve Gowda, Bhairon Singh Sekhawat and Ashwini Kumar—are likely to be happy to know that their praise of the Swami has been immortalised on the videotape.

Patralekha Chatterjee/New Delhi

“A Company that seeks
must be ready to



S H I P P I N G □ C O N S T R U C T I O N □ O F F S H O R E

the comfort of success
take the heat."



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On the right track

India Today's video magazine makes for compelling viewing

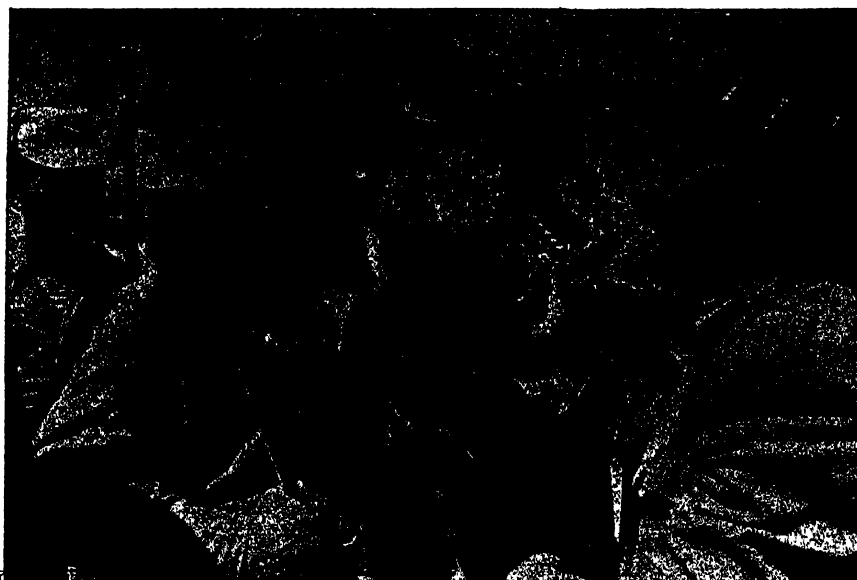
Indian journalists have two great advantages over their Western counterparts. Both relate to Doordarshan. First of all, we don't have the problem of trying to remain topical and newsy. A Western reader knows much of the news *before* he opens his paper: he saw it all on TV last night. An Indian reader on the other hand gets virtually no real news from Doordarshan (One instance: the network confirmed Indira Gandhi's death *after* the evening papers were already out with the story.)

Our second advantage relates to credibility: we can make whatever judgments we like about individuals without fear of contradiction. An American journalist cannot get away with portraying Dan Quayle as an intellectual giant: TV will show up the man for the dimwit he is. But in India, we can describe V. P. Singh as a determined macho figure, secure in the knowledge that the majority of our readers will never see the man up close.

It is this second advantage that *News-track*, India Today's video magazine threatens to undermine. It is less than a year old and already it has shown up Kalpnath Rai as one of the great jokers of our time, V. P. Singh as an effete, posturing ninny, Rahul Bajaj as a loud dum dum, Bhagwat Jha Azad as a tyrannical buffoon, and R. K. Hegde as a rather slow braggart. On the other hand, some of the print media's hate figures have scored. Menaka Gandhi comes across as a bright, charming person with well-thought out views, and K. K. Tewari seems the soul of reason.

News-track has been through many changes in content and orientation since it first appeared. The April and May editions suggest that the changes have paid off. Gone is the rubbish content (one edition even featured the trailer of a Hollywood film called *Moon Over Parador* for no good reason) and the tendency to be twee (the interview with Mickey Mouse, surely the low point of the India Today group's 14 years, gave a whole new meaning to the phrase 'Mickey Mouse' television); in its place is a hard-edged news-sense.

Some of the serious reports *News-track* has carried over the last two months have been excellent. Shekhar Gupta made sense of the complex Afghan problem (though was it really



• (Clockwise from above) The Afghan situation: excellent coverage; Ram Jethmalani: economical with the truth; Arun Nehru: uneasy on camera

necessary to have the anchor solemnly intone: "It goes without saying that they risked their lives to file this report."?). And the Bodoland issue, unfairly ignored

Jethmalani should give TV a miss unless Dr J.K. Jain is personally writing the script. And so should Arun Nehru, who is shown up by the camera as a frightened whale, its belly heaving nervously

by the national media, was the subject of a perceptive and well-handled segment.

Even some of the soft stories have improved. An interview with Zubin Mehta could have been the occasion for the kind of gush-gush blather that marred an earlier segment on Mira Nair, but the questions this time were hard-hitting and well researched. And though Manoj Raghuvanshi missed the point about Haji Mastaan (he is no longer a smuggler; there's much more money in real estate), the sequence was well put together and the old crook oozed charm into the camera. To Raghuvanshi's credit, he also took care to ensure in his summing-up that Mastaan was not glamorised.

News-track's real strength still lies in its straight interviews, in showing politicians as they really are. Under some hostile questioning, Ram Jethmalani con-

cedes that his Bharat Mukti Morcha's claim that the Sikhs were promised a state before Independence is false (but "truth must collide with error", he explains enigmatically) and accepts that the kind of state his Morcha wants is "not a feasible proposition". He is shown up as having been economical with the

attacks on Rajiv never come off and he is lucky that the questioning is so friendly. For instance, when he says he opposes all vendettas, nobody asks how he then explains his persecution of R. K. Dhanwan. The best part of the segment is when the interviewer earnestly asks: "Don't you feel like going up to Rajiv,

shaking him and saying 'I'm your brother?'" It is clear that such a Mills and Boon view of politics has never occurred to fatty, and he looks incredulous before conceding insincerely that he doesn't hate Rajiv. ("I just feel sorry for him.")

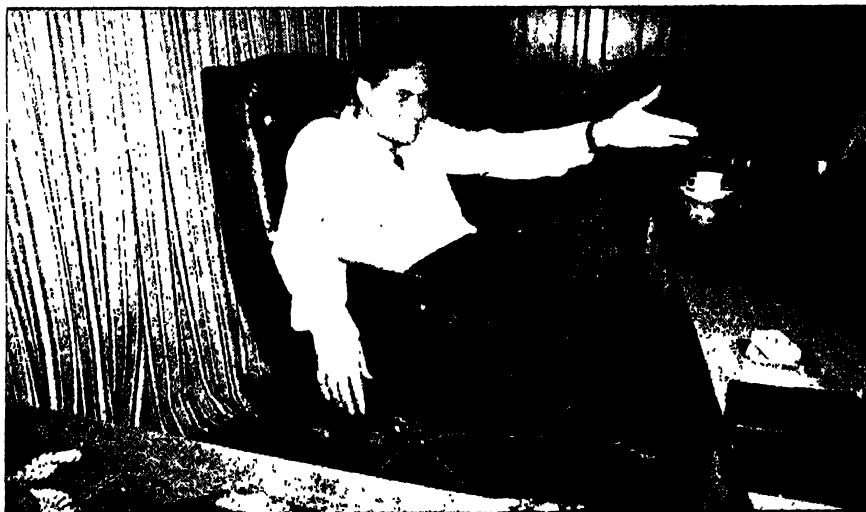
All in all, *Newstrack* is probably the best feature magazine in India these days, its visual impact giving it an edge over print media. Of course, it could improve. The English mistakes have become fewer, but the language is still awkward. (Example: "Unstable governments in Asia and Latin America have the unfortunate habit of attracting the superpowers to push with all their might to ensconce a puppet group favourable to their own ideology." Try reading that aloud without sounding foolish.) There is still a nasty PR edge to some segments—how can Muzaffar Ali's *Zoonie* be a "lyrical masterpiece" when he's not even shot one full reel of film? And must *India Today's* obsession with metaphors be transferred to the screen? It is a little tiresome to be told that somebody "burst on the scene like a comet", and that another chap exploded like a "supernova" before becoming "stellar dust".

Perhaps the fault lies in the script and not in the stars.

Vijay Sahn

Newstrack April and May 1989 A TV Today Production.

(Clockwise from below) Menaka Gandhi, Rahul Bajaj, V.P. Singh, Kalpnath Rai and R.K. Hegde: *Newstrack* scores in its interviews with them



truth in his questions to Rajiv and cheerfully concedes that he gets clients, whom he knows to be guilty, off the hook (though he adds "I get no joy from it"—poor tortured soul!). There is some unintentional humour in Jethmalani's statements: he attacks Rajiv for calling him a dog and then says, about the charge that he is a Khalistani, that the Congress(I) wants to "give a dog a bad name". But, this appearance, coupled with his memorable fumble on Vinod Dua's Bofors show, suggests that Jethmalani should give TV a miss unless Dr J. K. Jain is personally writing the script.

Another person who should run a million miles from a TV crew is Arun Nehru. The press calls him a canny bully but the camera captures a frightened whale, its belly heaving nervously. Nehru's uneasiness is such that his

Some of the print media's hate figures have scored. Menaka Gandhi comes across as a bright, charming person with well-thought-out views, and K.K. Tewari seems the soul of reason



The business of babies



Fetal attraction leads to the development of an entire industry

Nobody has quite been able to explain it, but it's been there almost as long as man himself. Fetal attraction. In the past, it led women to eat herbs, use ointments, and in extreme cases, worship the *shivalingam* in the hope of conceiving. Today, it is on the way to spawning a multi-crore industry. Babies are becoming big business and everyone's moving in for a slice of the action—doctors, Unani *hakims*, Ayurved practitioners, drug companies and, of course, the almost-mandatory quacks. And as medical research in the field of reproductive biology progresses at an amazing rate, and increasing numbers of people specialise in reproductive endocrinology, it has become easier to get pregnant than ever before.

Take the case of Sneha and Vijay Mhatre, for instance. Sneha has irretrievably damaged Fallopian tubes. In earlier years this would have meant a childless existence. But things have changed with the development of the invitro fertilisation (IVF) technique, better known as the test tube baby method. Thanks to this, the Mhatres are eagerly awaiting the birth of their first child in four months' time. Says Vijay: "Come October and I will be the happiest man in the world."

Infertility problems are also easier of solution these days because there is greater awareness among the people. Though, ignorance has not died out totally. There are still some like the school master in Madras who went to a 'doctor' complaining of impotency. The medical examination consisted of the 'doctor' taking up an electronic instrument and passing it all over the patient's body. The machine gave out a beep at regular intervals. Then, it was placed over the patient's genitals. The instrument was ominously silent. Yes, the doctor intoned, in solemn tone, the man was impotent. Then followed a course of expensive 'drugs' that would cure his impotency and lead to increased sexual performance (virility and potency being often confused with one another).

Religious mumbo-jumbo hasn't died down either. In the Shivratri festival in Junagarh, Gujarat, for instance, women come (sometimes from as far as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) to seek the 'blessing' of the Naga sadhus who congregate here on this occasion. The 'blessing' sometimes includes sexual intercourse, and surprisingly, the otherwise conservative rural society doesn't look down upon it. In fact, the women come accompanied by male relatives and even village elders.

In Madras, one sees barren women queueing up in front of the *samadhi* of

Annadurai, the Dravida leader, on Marina Beach, coconuts and camphor in hand. The camphor is lit and the coconuts broken ceremoniously, in the hope that Anna's blessings will help them conceive. "Don't they know," asked one sceptic wryly, "that Annadurai himself was a childless man?"

Such cases notwithstanding, awareness and knowledge of fertility-related disorders have increased on a general level. Says Dr Geeta Pandya, a Bombay-based gynaecologist, specialising in the field of reproductive endocrinology: "Previously couples would wait for years to get a baby and then only would they consult a doctor. But today, young couples who have not been able to conceive within the first six months after marriage take the help of gynaecologists."

Hence the increasing number of clinics that deal with infertility cases. In Bangalore there is the Gunasheela Institute of Reproduction, in Calcutta the Fertility Institute, in Madras the Shifa Invitro Fertilisation and Embryo Transfer (SIFE), and in Bombay the Fertility Clinic. The improvement in diagnostic methods has also helped.

Failure to conceive may result from any number of reasons. In the female it may be caused by a failure to ovulate, cervical hostility, genital tract infection, blocked Fallopian tubes or problems associated with the uterus (which may be inverted or completely absent). In males it may be caused by spermatogenesis, or arrest in the ability to produce sperm, low sperm count, no sperm count or impotence.

But whatever the cause, the arrival of a 'problem couple' at a clinic initiates a very expensive process. For, what follow are any number of high-priced tests. There will be, at first, a general examination of both partners. Many doctors insist on a routine Pap test of the woman to rule out cervical cancer. A blood test is recommended to check out on any hormonal dysfunction, and to ensure that the woman is immune to Rubella or German measles. There are cervical scourgings which cost Rs 50 per sitting, semen analysis to check the number, motility, shape and size of the sperm, and the sperm antibody test which comes to around Rs 150. The ultra-sonogram (Rs 400 per sitting), the laparoscopy (Rs 1,000-1,500) and a radio-immuno essay (Rs 1,000) complete the count of basic medical examinations.

Also, in case the problem is serious—blocked Fallopian tubes or an inverted uterus—surgery has to be performed.

So hospital costs are added on and the sum mounts further. Which perhaps explains why fertility clinics are frequented by the middle-class or the moneyed, though Dr Geeta Pandya insists that she is often approached by women belonging to the poorer sections of society. Most doctors, in fact, feel that too much is made of the money they allegedly make. Says Dr S. Ghosh Dastidar, a specialist at the Fertility Clinic and IVF Research Centre at Calcutta: "Infertility is a heavily paying subject only if you can squeeze the patient. I am a doctor and my reputation is of prime concern to me, not money. I have been practising for 12 years in this field and I can't even afford an average living room."

The field of female reproduction has become a 'super speciality' today, according to Dr Pandya. Perhaps, because the woman is generally regarded as the 'culprit' in case of inability to conceive. Hence, the reasons for female sterility are better publicised and understood. The most common of such problems concern the Fallopian tubes, which extend from the top of the uterus and reach backward and downward toward the ovaries.

Earlier a blockage in these tubes meant barrenness, but now medical science has come up with several answers to this problem. The most well-known of these—thanks to the well-publicised cases of test tube babies—is invitro fer-



A woman patient being examined: Improved diagnostic techniques



The study of female infertility has become a 'super speciality', possibly because the woman is always regarded as the 'culprit' in cases of inability to conceive

tilisation (IVF).

IVF is generally resorted to when the damage caused to the Fallopian tubes is such that it cannot be rectified by a tuboplasty operation. But success is far from guaranteed. Says Dr Susheela Gunasheela of the Gunasheela Institute of Reproduction in Bangalore: "There are large numbers of failures. Since 1983 we have done around 80 aspirations for IVF. We have managed to deliver only a single baby." Even abroad, maintains the doctor, success rates at the best research hospitals are only around 22 per cent. But the percentage of success is even lower here. Says Dr Gunasheela: "Highly qualified specialists have told us that our standards are in no way inferior to that of the laboratories abroad. The problem is that we have not figured out all the solutions." Dr Kalyani Mukherjee, professor of gynaecology and obstetrics in Calcutta Medical College, puts the success rate of the technique (which cost around Rs 40,000 to



Advertisements put out by 'sex doctors' and companies that manufacture fertility drugs

50,000) at 10 to 12 per cent only. Hence, she argues, it should not be made available to the poor who often "sell their land in the hope of a baby that may never be."

The Gamete Intra Fallopian Transfer (GIFT) is another way of overcoming the problem of blocked tubes. This is generally done if at least one of the tubes is normal. It differs from IVF in that fertilisation occurs inside the woman's reproductive tract, not in the laboratory. The male and female gametes are injected directly into the woman's Fallopian tubes. The embryos that result from fertilisation are nurtured in the tubes and then move down into the uterus for implantation. The GIFT technique is performed as a one-step procedure which takes approximately 40-60 minutes. The patient can return home either the same or the next day. The success rate in this method is higher—around 40 per cent—than in IVF.

These methods (GIFT and IVF) also come into play when the husband is oligospermic (with a low sperm count) or azoospermic (with total absence of sperm). In the first case, the husband's sperm is collected, concentrated by washing techniques and injected into the Fallopian tubes after fertilisation with the female gamete. In the latter case, provided both husband and wife are willing, a donor is approached.

This has its own problems. As Dr Ramani Maturanayagam, a leading Madras gynaecologist says: "Getting donors for artificial insemination is still very difficult in India. The method is also not very popular because of the legal implications and the cultural and sentimental barriers."

Ideally there should be a sperm bank, where the sperm of a donor whose genetic make-up is very similar to the foster father, could be given for purposes of insemination. But it will be a while before such facilities come to India. As of now, malpractices abound. In

Madras, for example, there are some laboratories where semen is collected from the local *rickshawallahs*, at Rs 7 per sample, and sold at Rs 25 to the gynaecologist-surgeons. And there's worse. Says Dr Narayana Reddy, a sex therapist: "I was shocked to find during a recent trip to a district down south that the doctors there are freely using donors for supplying semen for artificial insemination, while telling their patients that the stock actually came from their husbands."

Surgery is necessary in cases where

the uterus is inverted. The embryo after maturing in the Fallopian tubes cannot make its way into the uterus for implantation because it (the uterus) is positioned wrong.

In males, cases of impotency are often incurable. But if the cause of impotency is psychological, counselling often helps.

Sometimes though, the unfortunate male, haunted by feelings of inadequacy goes looking for miracle cures and finds himself in a place like the Khandani Shafakhana in New Delhi, which claims to cure anything from infertility, premature ejaculation, venereal diseases and impotence. Run by two sexologist brothers, Rajinder and Vijay Abbot, the Shafakhana's publicity brochure tells us that "Semen is the gem of life", and that masturbation and sodomy lead to decreased fertility. The Shafakhana has several courses of treatment for sexual disorders, all exotically named and stiffly priced: the Nawabi Shahana treatment (Rs 11,000); the London Shahana Special treatment (Rs 3,500) and the Africa Special treatment (Rs 1,100). And the customers keep rolling in. On any given

INFERTILITY ● REASONS

- Failure to ovulate. The ovary does not release the ovum (the female egg) during the menstrual cycle. Hence fertilisation with the sperm cannot take place.

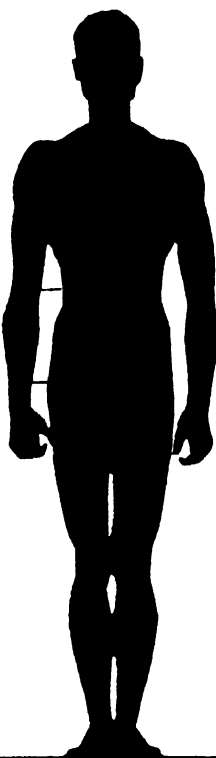
- Blocked or damaged Fallopian tubes. In this case the ovum that is released by the ovary cannot make its way towards the sperm for conception to occur.

- Cervical infection or cervical hostility, which prevents the sperm from travelling up into the Fallopian tubes.

- Impotency. This may be psychological or physiological in origin. In the latter instance, it is caused by some diseases such as typhoid, mumps, small pox, syphilis or gonorrhea. It may also be due to the excessive secretion of the hormone prolactin.

- Impotency is also caused by varicocele, in which the veins of the testes become large and tortuous reducing circulation.

- Obstruction to the vas deferens also leads to sterility.



day the place is full of anxious gentlemen, looking around furtively, afraid, no doubt, of having their 'shame' discovered.

In Madras, Triplicane High Road is infested with quacks. Some genuine practitioners of the Unani system are present, though. Dr Masood Madani, for instance, maintains: "The Unani system has a very good treatment for male impotency and such problems. I have cured many people."

But Madani is an exception. The Triplicane Road breed are best typified by the man who once treated a prominent Madras architect, who, suffering from a problem of severe premature ejaculation, thought that a Unani *hakim* might be able to do some good. The *hakim* promptly sent him off for a semen analysis, and when the unfortunate soul landed up with his report, felt his pulse with one hand and the other hand flung skywards solemnly declared: "*Khuda nahin chahta* (God is not willing)."

The advertisements of some of these miracle men make for interesting copy. In Bangalore, for instance, there is one quack who asks: "Have you lost your youth before or after marriage?" And

Says Dr Sulochana Gunasheela: "There are a large number of failures in the case of test tube pregnancies. Since 1983 we have done around 80 aspirations for IVF. We have managed to deliver only one baby"

then goes on to counsel: "Do not become dispirited. Take an appointment today. For loss of body strength and wet dreams, neutered problems (?), old diseases in women and lack of male child, there will be cure by medication after examination."

Secrecy is the name of the game. Says Dr Shakeel A. Roy, another sex specialist: "We will not tell you what treatment is offered, what medicines

prescribed. I cannot tell you what kind of patients come here. Many of them are big shots." And such is the nature of the disease and the aura of guilt associated with it that none of those duped ever complain.

T. Jayaprakash, deputy commissioner of police, Bangalore east, says: "In my entire career in service I have not come across a single case where I had to investigate a complaint against a sex doctor by a cheated patient." And it is difficult for the police to take action against quacks *suo moto*. "On what grounds?" asks Jayaprakash. "The quacks take care never to proclaim officially that they are qualified MBBS. They just state on their boards 'Government registered' which means nothing specific."

In recent times, however, there has been a great deal of research on male sterility, leading to a new breed of specialists—andrologists. Dr D.S. Pardani, professor and head of the department of urology in K.E.M. hospital, Bombay, discloses that contrary to popular myth women are not always responsible for sterility. It has been established that in nearly 40 per cent of the cases the male is either partially or wholly responsible.

Varicocele can be successfully treated, in most cases, with the Doppler technique, which helps the flow of blood in the affected veins. So can the obstruction to the vas deferens. The problem arises with the idiopathic cases—numbering as many as 40 per cent—where the doctor doesn't have a clue as to what is wrong with a patient. Here, the "empirical treatment" is resorted to—that is, different courses are tried out at random in the hope that one of them will work.

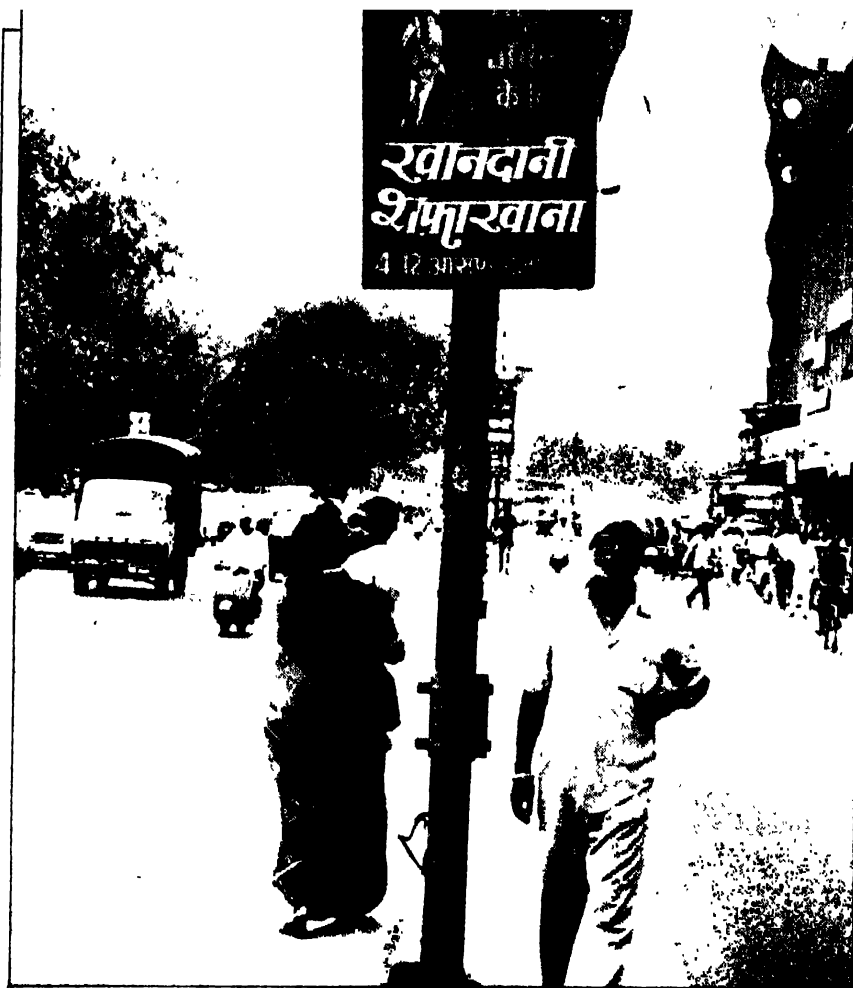
Virility pills, sex tonics and the drugs administered by the army of Ayurvedic doctors, Unani *hakims* and assorted quacks are categorised as "empirical treatment" by Dr Pardani. He says: "Most of these so-called sex tonics manufactured by all these pharmaceutical concerns are all rubbish." The general consensus is that these drugs work because they induce the 'placebo effect', by which a patient feels that there is a marked improvement in his condition after taking a course of medicine.

Whatever the reason, there's no denying the popularity of Ayurveda and companies such as Charak Pharmaceuticals are doing roaring business because of this. Charak markets, among other things, an aphrodisiac (Pallywyn Forte tablets), non-hormonal preparation (M2 Tone Syrup) which "corrects ovarian and uterine dysfunction, regulates

SOLUTIONS

- Administering drugs which induce ovulation. Some formulations such as Serophene stimulate the hypothalamus to release hormones which induce ovulation. Others such as Pergonal and Metrodin directly stimulate the ovarian follicles with the same effect.
- The blockage in the tubes can be removed surgically by the tubo-plasty operation. If the damage is irreparable Gamete Intra Fallopian Transfer (GIFT) or invitro fertilisation (IVF) is resorted to.
- Artificial insemination is the answer to this problem. The husband's semen is collected and then injected directly into the woman for fertilisation to occur.
- If psychological in origin, it can be treated by counselling. If caused by dysfunction of the hormone prolactin, it is treated with drugs such as Bromocryptine.
- There are techniques like the Doppler, which aid the flow of blood in the affected veins and help remove sterility.
- Treated surgically





A roadside hoarding advertising the Khandani Shafakhana: roaring business

menstrual cycles, helps conception and minimises menopausal disturbances". Addyzoa tablets "stimulate spermatogenesis, improves quality, quantity of semen, and increases sperm count and motility."

Most of the products are basically Ayurvedic 'pep pills', which make a person's sex life take an upswing, the argument being that increased sexual performance enhances the chances of conception. While Dabur India Limited sells Shilajit and Ashwagandha capsules (targeted at both sexes), Baidyanath markets a product called Vita-X, and Zandu Pharmaceuticals has introduced a tonic called Vigorex. S. Ramachandran, general manager, marketing, Dabur, says: "Over the years people have found aphrodisiac properties in products like Shilajit (a rock exudate). On the other hand, you have products like Tertex Forte (manufactured by the Himalayan Drug Company) that certainly improve sperm count."

Dabur is also planning to launch a new formulation in the next month or so. Now labelled simply the 'Herbal sex tonic', it is likely to be called something like Staminex once it hits the market. Products such as these are most popular in Delhi, Bombay, Ahmedabad and Uttar

Pradesh, which together account for 80 per cent of the total sales.

The allopathic drug market is booming too. Currently estimated at Rs 50 crores a year, it is growing at a mind-boggling



Sometimes even counselling doesn't help in cases of impotency. So, the male, haunted by feelings of inadequacy, finds himself in a sex clinic like the Khandani Shafakhana in Delhi

15 per cent per annum. The main players are Ciba Geigy and Organnon India. On the other hand, the organised Ayurvedic market is worth Rs 6-8 crores, while the unorganised sector is valued at more than Rs 100 crores at a conservative estimate.

But improved facilities are only part of the answer. In the ultimate analysis, success depends on the diagnostic skill of the doctor. Very often it is seen that doctors interpret the results of medical examinations incorrectly. While to err is only human, there's no getting around the fact that such mistakes can prove very, very expensive for the patient.

The case of Kavita Sinha (32), married for nine years, is illustrative. Says Sinha: "For six months I was on neuro vitamins given to me by my gynaecologist, after which she declared that I was fine and could conceive." She did not become pregnant. So, Kavita changed doctors, only to be told that the fault actually lay in her husband. Nothing happened even after his entire treatment was over. Now she has booked herself for IVF and is patiently waiting her turn, in the hope that this will do the trick. Says Sinha ruefully: "We have spent a lot of money on this. So much so that I can't even begin to calculate."

Sheila (29) and Siddharth Roy (39) have been trying to have a baby for the past ten years. Says Roy: "These doctors made us go through so many tests—all for money. Just running around getting them done has taken ten years." In all, the Roys have spent about Rs 30,000, a sum they can ill-afford. Says Sheila: "I have to do a partime job or else we couldn't possibly manage."

In the meanwhile, research goes on, and new and improved techniques for induced fertilisation are evolved. The latest such method, according to Dr Zubeida Begum, of the SIFE centre in Madras, is the 'micro-injection of sperm', and is used when the male has a very low sperm count. Instead of collecting the semen and increasing the concentration of sperm by washing methods, the two or three sperm cells in the semen are isolated and injected directly into the woman's ovaries for fertilisation. Only one birth by this method has been recorded so far—in Singapore—but it won't be long before it makes its way into India, to offer those possessed by the fetal attraction yet another way out of sterility.

Adite Chatterjee/Bombay, R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras, Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore, Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi and Subodha Rangamani/Calcutta

Premadasa's games

The Lanka President has been forced to adopt an anti-Indian posture

Emergency has once again been imposed in Sri Lanka by President Ranasinghe Premadasa. Incidentally, it was the same President Premadasa who on 11 January this year had put an end to five years of Emergency. Premadasa had begun his tenure on an optimistic note, but by June all hopes that he had fostered were dashed to the ground. The indications were clear from the beginning. Soon after assuming office, he reversed the decisions that had been taken by his predecessor, President J. R. Jayewardene. Despite protests from the Indian army, President Premadasa went ahead to hold talks with the LTTE after releasing 1000-odd terrorists from jail. Simultaneously, in a move to appease the Sinhala chauvinists, President Premadasa publicly adopted an anti-India stance. It was his way of humiliating India.

It was on 16 June this year that President Premadasa slaughtered the Indo-Sri Lanka accord to declare that the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) would have to quit his country by 29 July. He had, in fact, made similar declarations earlier but his 16 June speech was aimed at belittling India. His motive was clear: appease the anti-Indian Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP). So, the President went ahead to pour out his venom at the IPKF and India on Sri Lankan television. He said that since the Indian soldiers had come in at the invitation of a President, they would have to go out on the request of a President also.

President Premadasa got the reply to his anti-Indian speech on 21 June. On that day, the Indian government took a firm stand stating that the 1000 Indian soldiers who had given up their lives in Sri Lanka had not done so in vain. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in a letter to the Sri Lanka President aired the government view to declare that the withdrawal of the IPKF depended totally on the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement.

If the situation in Sri Lanka deteriorates once again, then it will be simply due to India and Sri Lanka having gone back to 1984. At that time divisive forces were tearing the island apart and President Jayewardene, in his effort to keep the country united, adopted a similar anti-India stance as the Janata Vimukti Peramuna has done today. Shrewd and experienced politician that he was, Jayewardene realised that the only power which could prevent his country from breaking up into pieces was India. That is, perhaps, why he accepted the constitutional division of Sri Lanka and got India to protect the geographical boundaries of his country. The Lankan Constitution was amended and the election to the

provincial councils were held.

The Indian government, keeping in mind the future of the Tamils, accepted President Jayewardene's decision. The move would not only help the Tamils but also guarantee the territorial integrity of the island. Today, it is not possible for India to forget one of its responsibilities and ensure the fulfillment of the other.

Premadasa, however, thinks so. That is why the Sri Lanka government put forward the view in pro-government newspapers, that if Indian troops did not quit the island, the Lankan government would have to take the matter to the International Court of Justice and the United Nations Security Council. It was a ploy on the part of the Premadasa government to deflect the average Sri Lankan's mind from the troubled state of the country. Premadasa does not realise that his term as President of a united Sri Lanka will be short-lived if he continues to insult India.



**President
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and demand
the
withdrawal
of the IPKF**

It is my personal opinion that Sri Lanka is not bold enough to go to any international forum. If Premadasa does so at the behest of a foreign power, it will bring more trouble to him because the views of the north-eastern provincial council would also have to be heard out. Sri Lanka would then have to clarify its inhuman anti-Tamil role it had adopted till 1987.

Sri Lanka has to realise that the men of the peace keeping force have not died in vain. That is perhaps why President Premadasa seems to have forgotten that there are Tamil groups other than the LTTE. There is, for example, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) which has, on India's orders, kept quiet. TELO would have been more than happy to acquire arms from India again and form a separate, independent state.

Even before Premadasa made his 16 June demand, India had started recalling the IPKF troops. Rajiv Gandhi, in fact, had announced on 24 April at an army commanders' conference, that the number of armymen would be gradually reduced.

If by any chance India were to be soft towards Premadasa, it would amount to a national insult. In turn, it would give the JVP its clout. The communal division that was prevalent in 1983 would come to the surface once again. It is high time India made some permanent arrangement to protect the Tamils. Foreign relations are not conducted on ideals. Friendship with neighbouring countries is only possible when one realises a neighbour's status. In clear terms, India should bring about a Cyprus-like solution to Sri Lanka, no matter what the cost. ■

The lady plays truant

Much to the embarrassment of AIADMK leaders, Jayalalitha surfaces after a month-long 'disappearance'

Where is Jayalalitha? For more than a month, this was the one question that everyone in Tamil Nadu was asking. The prima donna of Tamil Nadu politics always had a knack for making news, but this time she chose to do so by apparently going into hiding. Jayalalitha was last seen in public in mid-May, and ever since, everybody, including her own AIADMK partymen, has been busy trying to figure out her whereabouts.

But the guessing game ended abruptly on 20 June, when the resident of the Poes Garden bungalow surfaced to sign affidavits in defamation suits she had filed in the Madras High Court against two Madras magazines, claiming damages of Rs 10 lakhs. With that, senior AIADMK functionaries who were embarrassed by queries from the press about their party general secretary's whereabouts heaved a sigh of relief. Some had earlier said she was in Madras, while others maintained that she had gone to either Bangalore, Hyderabad, or Goa; but nobody seemed to know for certain. And there was no way the party could conceal its confusion. The ridiculous situation only fuelled the growing dissatisfaction within the party ranks over the "influence" her friends—M. Natarajan and his wife, Shashikala—have come to wield over her. The grip of the Natarajans over Jayalalitha happens to be so strong that even senior party leaders have to be content with taking orders from them instead of from Jayalalitha directly, and, at times, Jayalalitha's decisions on important matters are not available on time, forcing the party administration to grind to a halt, when it needs to remain fine-tuned in an election year.

As for the defamation suits her counsel, K. Subramaniam, has filed, it was Jayalalitha herself who had inspired the publication of the stories against which she had now gone to court. Her long 'vacation' and the deafening silence maintained by her partymen about her whereabouts, led to a spate of speculations in the media. Newspapers claimed that she was convalescing in a natur-
opathy centre near Bangalore, holidaying in Goa or resting in her vineyard,

in Hyderabad. But the more enterprising ones went a step further and came out with stories suggesting that she had taken an overdose of sleeping pills.

In its 16 June issue, the mass-circulated Tamil weekly, *Kumudam*, claimed in an article 'Vennai Pashumai' (Butter Doll) that Jayalalitha was in a confused state of mind for some time and that she had bolted herself in her bedroom at her Poes Garden residence following a tiff with her staff. Later, when her aide Shashikala, failed to get any response from her despite persistent knockings on the door, an

'emergency' exit was broken open and Jayalalitha was found lying in her bed with a bottle of sleeping pills beside her.

A translation of the story was carried by the Madras-based English fortnightly, *Aside*, which alleged that Jayalalitha "is in the habit of taking sleeping pills and that she is a drug addict". In her plaint, Jayalalitha has said: "Just as the freedom of the press is necessary for the dissemination of information about public affairs and other matters of public interest, it is equally in the public interest to see that not merely the reputation of an individual but his or her private

Jayalalitha: mysterious disappearance



affairs, which are unrelated to public affairs, should be protected from unwarranted publicity in the press as it amounts to outrageous invasion of privacy in the modern times when the press is overstepping in every direction the obvious bounds of propriety and decency."

Earlier, another Tamil weekly, *Tharasu*, had also launched a campaign against Jayalalitha's 'disappearance'. K. Shyam, the magazine's editor, filed a *habeas corpus* petition in the Madras High Court, alleging that Jayalalitha was being illegally held by Natarajan, and pleaded that Natarajan and the city police commissioner, P. Dorai, be directed to produce her in court and set her free.

A division bench of the court, however, dismissed the petition, saying that Shyam had failed to establish a *prima facie* case to show that Jayalalitha was being held in illegal custody. "We fail to understand how Ms Jayalalitha, who is the leader of the Opposition and who had a considerable number of followers, can be confined by a single individual without the knowledge of any one of them" the judges observed. They also said that a person had a fundamental right to privacy just as one had the right to seek information, referring to Shyam's plea that he could not contact Jayalalitha to know her views on certain public matters. The court also wondered why no AIADMK functionary had lodged any complaint to the effect that their leader was being held against her will.

But affairs within the AIADMK are somewhat more complicated than the court judgement has made it out to be. The fact is that even senior leaders, despite repeated attempts of get in touch with Jayalalitha over important matters, have been kept out by the coterie around her. Different reasons were given to the leaders who wanted to meet her by the Natarajans about why Jayalalitha was unable to meet them. And this, in turn, spawned speculation.

Indeed, senior party leaders were shocked to learn that Natarajan was in Delhi to negotiate with the Congress(I) regarding candidates for the Rajya Sabha poll. "She should have sent one of us for the discussions instead of sending a personal friend like Natarajan, who is not equipped for the job," complained a deputy general secretary of the party.

Of the six Rajya Sabha seats, to which elections are to be held soon, five are sure to be won by the DMK-led front, but it was not yet certain as to whether it will be the Congress(I) or the AIADMK that will contest the sixth

seat. The Congress(I) needs to get 34 votes to win, while it has only 26 members in the Assembly. The only way it can have its man from Tamil Nadu in the Rajya Sabha is by dissuading the AIADMK, which has 27 seats, from going ahead on its own. But, said one senior leader bitterly, "We hear that Natarajan has told the bosses in Delhi that our party would give in to the Congress(I) demand. We have not been consulted on this."

Besides the 'disappearance' of Jayalalitha and the hold the Natarajans apparently have over her, the AIADMK leaders apprehend that the Congress(I) might change tack and team up with the DMK in the state. They say that the DMK president, M. Karunanidhi, is not keen on remaining in the National Front, despite the fact that the Front partners have agreed to adopt the DMK party symbol, the rising sun, as the poll symbol of the Front also. The DMK chief,

they feel, may not be entirely averse to the idea of entering into an alliance with the Congress(I) in order to have a glitch-free term of five years, if he is convinced that the National Front is too weak to topple the Congress(I) at the Centre.

The AIADMK top brass fears that Rajiv Gandhi might opt to go along with the DMK, given the chaos prevailing in their own party. "It is possible that Rajiv Gandhi might accept Karunanidhi's offer, after seeing how woefully our party is being conducted with the leader disappearing and none of us knowing her whereabouts. What would he do if he urgently needs to consult madam on some election issue, and those manning Poes Garden tell him that she is just not available?" wonders another AIADMK functionary.

Apparently, Jayalalitha instructed her staff at the Poes Garden bungalow not to allow any politician to meet her. According to some insiders, she did this in



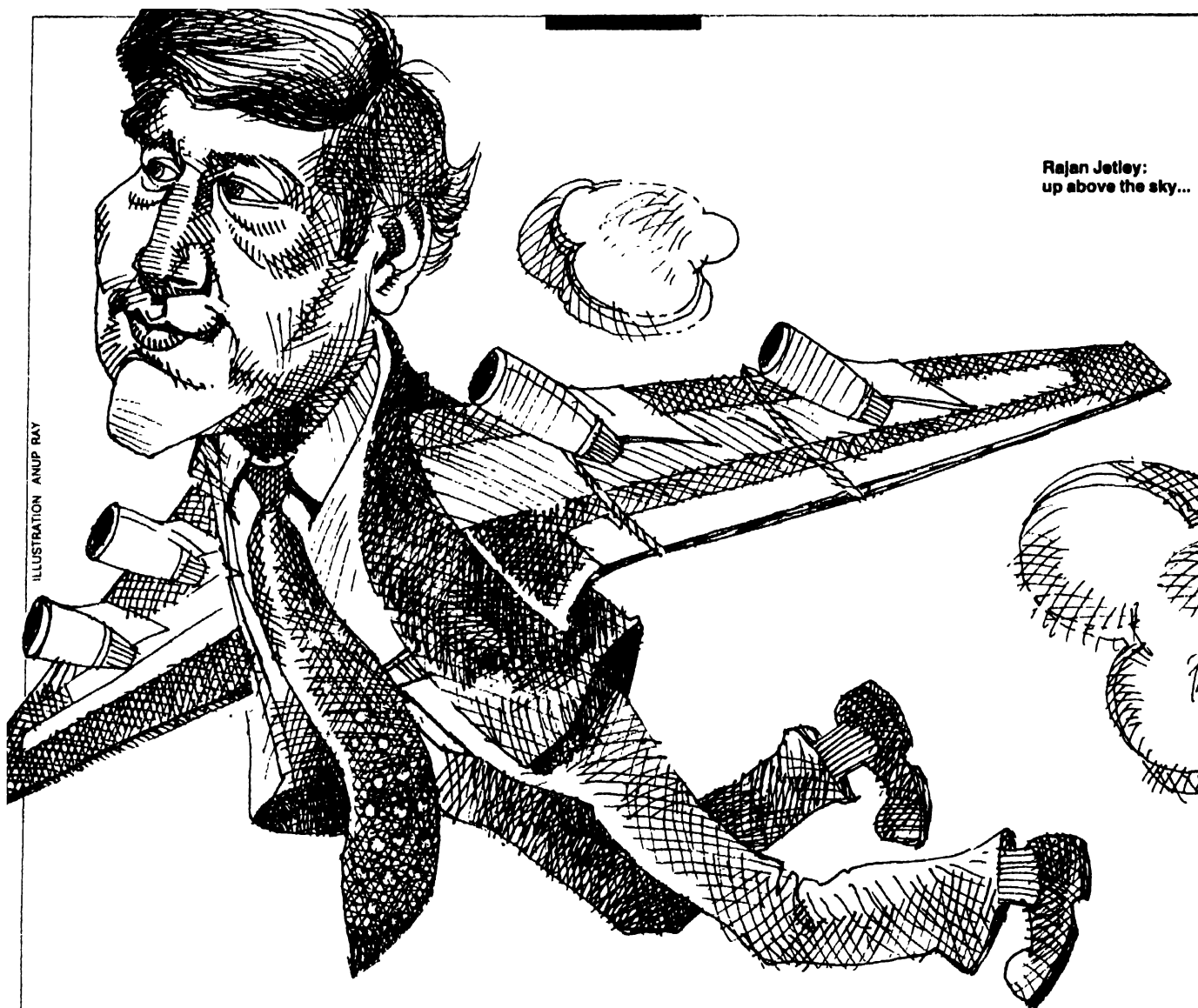
**The grip of Natarajan,
a friend of Jayalalitha,
is so strong on her
that even top
AIADMK
functionaries have to
be content with taking
instructions from him**

**Jayalalitha at her Poes Garden bungalow:
keeping partymen out**

order to stave off pressure from partymen seeking nomination to contest the Rajya Sabha poll or district party posts.

The tragedy of the AIADMK men is that though they had once opposed M.G. Ramachandran when he tried to project Jayalalitha as his heir apparent, now find their political careers inseparably woven to Jayalalitha's. And if the goings-on at Poes Bungalow is any indication of the shape of thing to come, Jayalalitha may well be preparing to retire from politics. The question that now faces them is: after Jayalalitha who?

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras



Rajan Jetley:
up above the sky...

AIR-INDIA

Flying out of the red

Rajan Jetley silences his critics by turning the much-maligned international carrier around with an impressive profit

Air-India had created a minor flutter last year when it ferried a lone passenger on one of its prestigious Jumbos from London to Bombay. It is not exactly known how the fortunate loner was treated by the Air-India hostesses on board. By all reasoning, the passenger should have been treated like a maharaja. Interestingly, the pilot of a Boeing 747 belonging to one of the largest US airlines had once advised his flight crew: "Offer your services to passengers when you find one." Fortunately for Air-India, the incident has not been repeated since.

Not only that, the airline has travelled a long way: it has flown back into the black after the heavy losses of the last couple of years. Indeed, as the company has claimed, considering the fact that A-I had lost Rs 43 crores last year, the profit of Rs 40 crores this year represents a substantial financial turnaround of Rs 83 crores in a single year. Not bad going for Rajan Jetley, the Air-India managing director, who spent the better part of the last 12 months fighting to keep his seat.

But a large part of the profit resulted from better financial management and

government concessions rather than mere physical improvement in the functioning of the airline. For example, Air-India had saved no less than Rs 8 crores in insurance premium last year. In a telephonic interview, Rajan Jetley explained that the company had been able to make considerable savings on interest costs through swapping foreign exchange loans. Jetley further claimed that no less than \$5 million were gained by repaying the airline's past high interest bearing loans with new tranches available from international financial markets at much lower interest rates. The loan swapping was carried out by Chase Manhattan Bank and State Bank of India (SBI) which fetched the company fresh loans at about 9.5 per cent, against its former loans at 10.62 per cent.

Jetley is confident about the airline's immediate future. New markets are proposed to be tapped, routes to be rationalised and extra fat to be shed. Air-India proposes to introduce a service to Chicago, Los Angeles and Toronto. The flight to Libya is slated to be reintroduced with Iran and Iraq being on the probables list. Plans are also afoot to delink Tokyo from Osaka.

Jetley is happy that his routes have lowered their losses while some have shown a little more surplus. The staple services on the UK sector had turned in lower losses of Rs 11 crores last year, against Rs 17 crores in the previous year. He might well have wished that all his routes had gone the Japan way—the services to that country had shown a surplus of Rs 10 crores, against last year's profit of Rs 3.5 crores only.

If the Japan route had shown a spectacular spurt in 1988-89, the Gulf routes have continued to be Air-India's staple revenue earner. The Gulf services provided a Rs 46-crore profit last year, up by about Rs 3 crores in the previous year. Even the difficult US sector yielded a Rs 50-lakh profit against a massive Rs 17-crore loss in the earlier year.

With the bottom line looking healthy, everything seems to be hunky-dory at present. Even the bitter battle with his board led by chairman Ratan Tata seems to be a thing of the past for Jetley, who has gone on record saying that the A-I board members now have a pragmatic approach.

The Air-India managing director's persuasive abilities and influence over bureaucratic circles have also helped to improve the airline's bottom line in the form of bulk fuel discounts. These discounts, it is said, saved an outgo of no less than Rs 18 crores from his coffers. Since fuel costs roughly about 170 cents

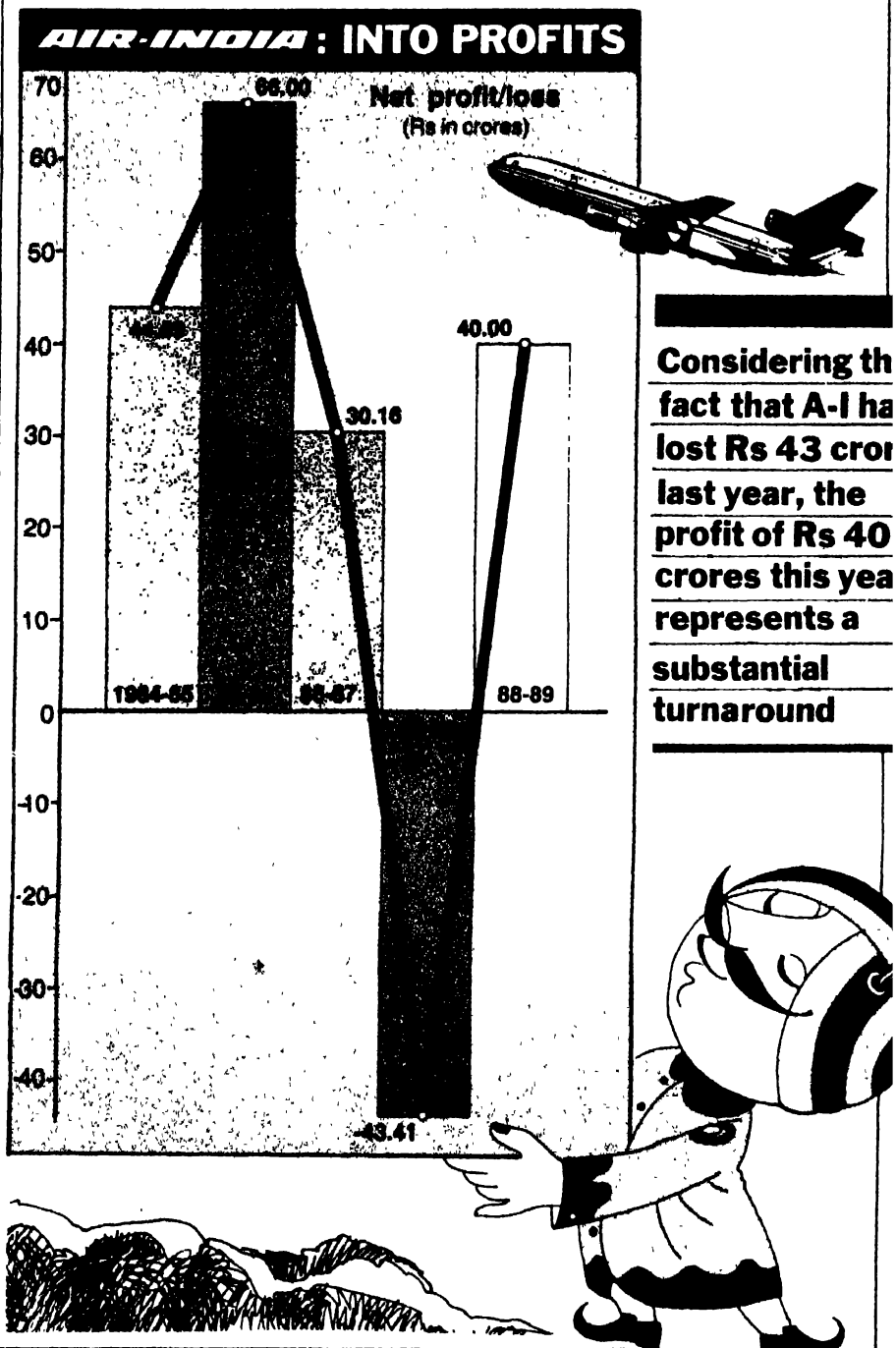
in India against the international price of 60 cents, the discounts meant all the difference for Jetley, who was under fire for most of last year for the airline's nosedive into the red. Nevertheless, the better performance of the airline this year is an achievement to begin with.

Air services have an element of show business and international airlines realise this very well. While Air-India's 'Maharaja' image had an enduring quality, Jetley recognises the need to refurbish it regularly. Keeping a focus on its international clientele, Air-India is hotly pursuing its plans for image build-up with expert advice from one of the leaders in

the business: Landor Associates of the US. The bill for the new corporate image exercise is a cool Rs 50 crores. Ethnic seems to be on the way out and even the eternal 'Maharaja' has put on western attire to woo customers.

Some of its competitors are known to change their dirty carpets every now and then in the name of offering the best services. Air-India intends to do better than that. All that the airline is saying for the present is "We are changing". But come September, India's international carrier promises to be an altogether new and modern airline.

Anjan Roy/New Delhi



Big trouble for small car

Sipani Automobiles is pulled up by the government for claims made in its advertisement blitz

The fuel-efficient diesel Montana car from the Bangalore-based Sipani Automobiles Limited (SAL) has run into trouble again. The government has questioned the company's failure to follow the new guidelines in publishing advertisements inviting bookings and making claims regarding fuel-efficiency and delivery schedules. For the perennially trouble-hit company the future was beginning to look bright when it announced its much-trumpeted new Montana—before the Union govern-

The government has termed as "misleading" a press statement by R.K. Sipani, SAL's managing director that bookings will be "liquidated in 24 months". The government has pointed out that 15,000 cars cannot be delivered in two years when the company's licensed capacity is only 3,000 cars per annum. Countering Sipani's claims that diesel engines based on Mitsubishi technology from Japan have been used, the government says that it is "not aware of permission for import of this technology".

The government has stated that the company's advertisements have failed to specify planned production for the next five years as well as the record on refund of booking deposits made for the

earlier Montana petrol cars. The left has pointed out that the government has been receiving complaints from the public on non-refund of deposits. With failure-prone record since its inception the Seventies, SAL has rolled out maximum of 523 cars in 1985. In 1988 i production stood at 210 cars. The government has now directed the company to explain matters within a week's time.

Sipani, who spoke to SUNDAY over phone from New Delhi, admits that his company had erred in releasing its advertisements without following the



R.K. Sipani: misleading?

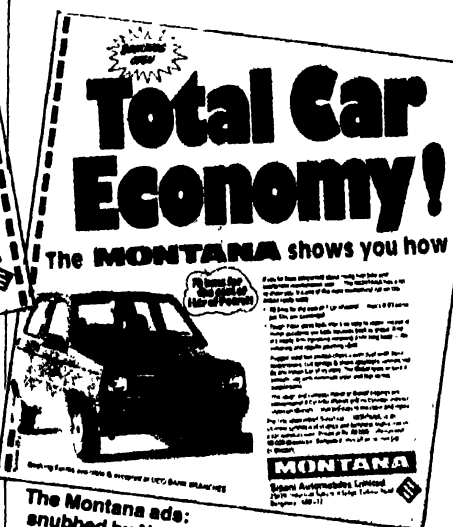
The problems started with the car bookings in the north where the response was really good. The obvious hint is that Maruti Udyog started it all

guidelines. "We are now releasing the corrected advertisement," he says. The new advertisement mentions that the vehicles will start rolling out from October this year and steps will be taken to augment production. They would also

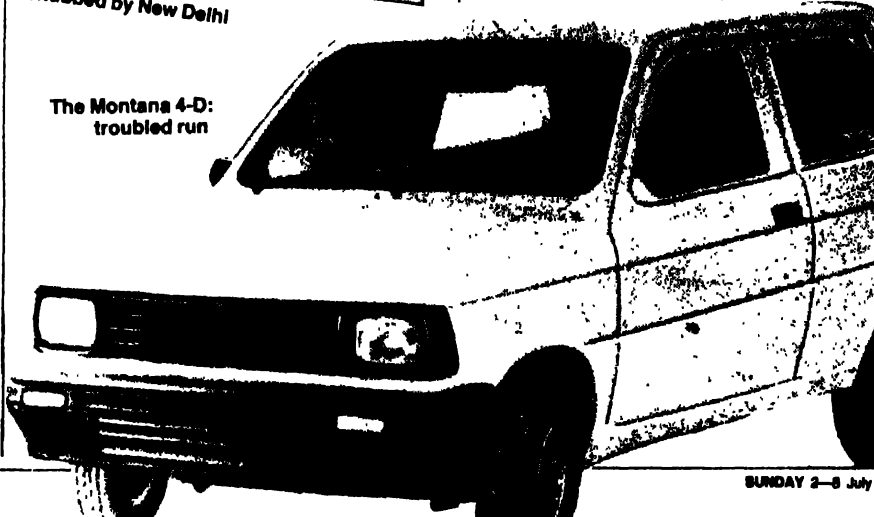


ment came out with the snub. Bookings for the diesel Montana which were opened in February last, have already crossed the 15,000-mark all over the country. The high-pitched advertising campaign touting the line, "Seventy kilometres for the cost of a litre of petrol", did the trick.

In a letter dated 16 June, the Union government has termed the company's claims in the advertisement as "misleading". Although the defence ministry's Vehicles Research and Development Establishment (VRDE), Ahmednagar, certified that the Montana-4D diesel car showed a fuel efficiency of 28 km per litre under test conditions, the government objects to the claims of "fuel efficiency". In its letter the government has further pointed out that the norms for fuel-efficiency for diesel cars have not yet been fixed.



The Montana ads: snubbed by New Delhi



The Montana 4-D: troubled run

mention that all pending applications for refund had been settled.

Says Sipani, "Our fault was that this should have been mentioned in the advertisements before we started booking." However, even this leaves a lot unexplained. With its miserable track record, how did the company hope to deliver 15,000 cars within a couple of years everybody wondered. Says Sipani, "We will ask the government to increase the licensed capacity." He points out that the government itself was of the opinion that the minimum viable volume for the automobile industry was 50,000 vehicles. "We did approach the government for increased capacity earlier. But then we were told that there was no need for it because of our low production volumes," adds Sipani. He reasons this out saying that the government will not stop a company from going in for increased production as long as it does not involve imports and foreign exchange.

He insists that his diesel Montana is completely indigenous since the engines are being supplied by the Bangalore-based VST Tillers and Tractors Limited, which already has an existing collaboration with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. Sipani explains that the company has an "understanding"—a lease arrangement according to company sources—to use the facilities of the city-based Vicor Ltd, to manufacture automobile parts to augment production. At the end of five years the company hopes to produce 12,000 cars annually.

Sipani, however, still falls short on answers. In the absence of a definite agreement with VST Tillers and Tractors for a continuous supply of diesel engines even with augmented capacity, it is not clear how SAL will keep to its delivery schedules. Company sources argue, "These are not problems. We can always get similar engines from other sources if it becomes necessary." The Sipani line is that there is nothing like a crisis at present in real terms.

The real picture can be gathered from company insiders. It appears that the Sipanis are bitter about the fact that the government has released a press statement on its pulling up the company. The sources point out that when the bookings began in the south and west in February, there had been no objections from the Union government. "The problems started with bookings in the north where the response was really good," say the sources. What they mean is that Maruti Udyog started it all. A little far-fetched, perhaps, but the dwarf is obviously scared of the giant.

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

COMPUTER POINT

Grabbed by the Modis

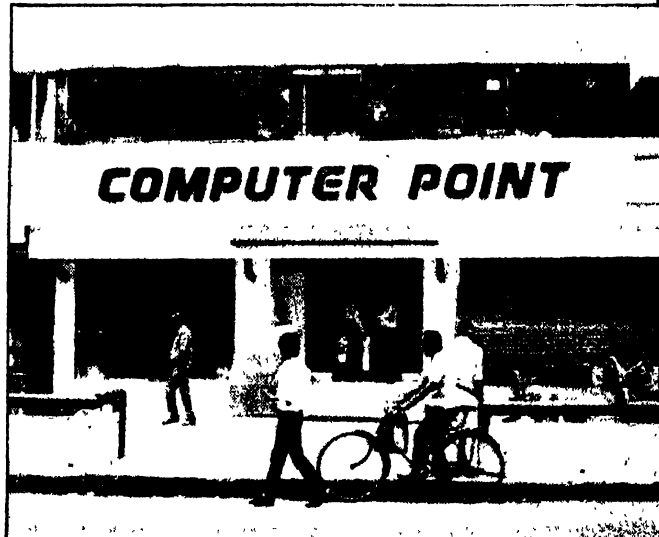
Indian Organic Chemicals sells off India's largest computer retail chain to office automation king B. K. Modi

The deal has virtually been clinched. This month, Computer Point, India's largest ritzy retail outlet for personal computers started by Indian Organic Chemicals, will pass into the control of office automation king Dr B.K. Modi. For the B.K. Modi group, which has ushered in a revolution in Indian offices with state-of-the-art copiers from Modi Xerox and electronic typewriters from Modi Olivetti, the acquisition of the 10-outlet Computer Point marks their foray into the fast-developing computer market. Said B.M. Ghia, chairman of Indian Organic, "We would like them to see the audited accounts of Computer Point before closing the deal. But fundamentals like price have already been discussed." The Ghias will sell their 25 per cent shareholding to the Modis for a cool Rs 5 crores.

But why did the Ghias decide to sell off Computer Point? Market reports had it that Indian Organic was severely strapped for cash which was stalling its diversification plans. Even about four years ago the Bombay-based chemical giant, flush with funds, was looking for avenues to expand. While it stepped up its synthetic fibre production, it also turned to the consumer products segment—processed foods, (Nik Naks potato wafers), a chain of Mothercare children's products shops and computer retailing and franchise. Little did it know that the impending glut in polyester staple fibre (PSF) would knock the bottom out of the market. By 1988, the company had run up liabilities of Rs 103 crores and was Rs 15 crores in the red in the bargain. And hence the sale of their shares in Computer Point.

Ghia, however, scoffed at these rumours. Says he, "How much is 10 per cent going to fetch us if we really had a cash crunch? On the contrary, Indian

Organic results which we have just declared, are there for all to see." Ghia points out that Indian Organic made a profit of Rs 2 crores after providing Rs 16 crores as interest, Rs 11 crores for depreciation, Rs 3.4 crores for investment reserve fund, Rs 2.6 crores as doubtful debts. He adds, "We did make a loss last year, but we turned the corner by toning up the management. Our export of PSF alone for the five months ending March 1989 was Rs 3.5 crores and if the momentum continues, we could end up with exports of Rs 15 to 20



Computer Point in Calcutta: change of guard

crores. Indian Organic's income was Rs 221.64 crores against Rs 142.92 crores in the previous year. We have declared a ten per cent dividend." He goes on to ask "Does this look like we are strapped for cash?"

Whatever be it, parting with Computer Point must have been difficult. The Ghias had shown tremendous foresight when they went into the computer retailing business five years ago. It was a greenfield area. "It is not competition that got us down," avers Ghia. "We had the run of the market. We were the pioneers, the market was at our disposal." But he concedes that "though we had the best professionals to manage it, perhaps retailing software was not as easy as we had thought. Maybe we selected the wrong people. So the fault is ours." According to sources close to

Ghia, the Computer Point headquarters in Bangalore is top heavy. They took people at high salaries and with impressive designations, but they just didn't seen up to the task, they point out.

The reasons apart, Computer Point turned in disappointing results in the last two years. While it made a marginal loss last year, it is expected to make a higher loss on an estimated Rs 22-crore turnover in the year ending March 1989. To

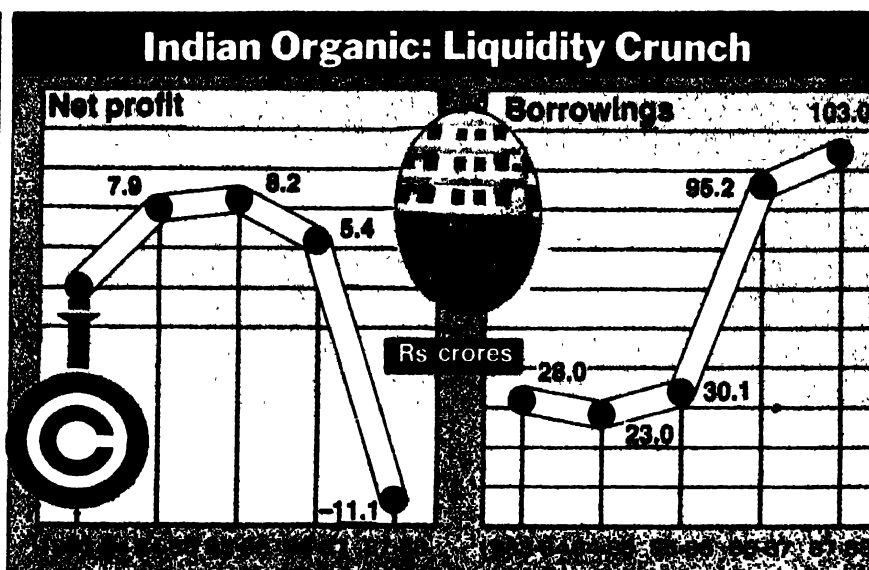


B.M. Ghia: difficult decision

compound matters, there has been an exodus of senior personnel, including chief executive R. Ramaraj. And Ghia himself felt that he could not wait any longer for the retail computer chain to make enough profits to enable him to declare a dividend. Says he, "After all it is a trading company. It has no gestation period, depreciation, etc. It should have made a profit the day it opened shop. Something went wrong somewhere."

The Indian Organic chief offers another and somewhat different reason for wanting to trim his business interests. "We are a small family and are tied up with running Indian Organic and Chika Ltd (turnover Rs 100 crores). My elder son, Dilip, looks after Chika which is a trading company, and younger son Shyam looks after everything else."

Be that as it may, Computer Point was an exciting happening in India's march into the world of personal computers. It offered a place under one roof for the small buyer who was confused by the bewildering range of computers available in the market. At Computer Point he could see them all under one roof and make his choice. As the craze for computers grew and PCs found their way into people's homes, business grew, but, as Ghia says, "not enough to declare dividends". They had also planned to have 40 outlets by 1990 but were far short of this target with just ten in



1989. Even so, the chain had a lot of promise as it offered computerware from big names like Lotus (Lotus 1-2-3, Symphony, Graphwriter and Manuscript), Wipro and Xedes Corporation of the US.

If Computer Point was proving to be a difficult proposition for the Ghias, for the

Modis it would be an ideal outlet for their vast range of office equipment, especially with the prospect of Olivetti computers hitting the market within the next few months. However, until B.K. Modi signs on the dotted line, the Ghias are keeping their fingers crossed.

Oiga Tellis/Bombay

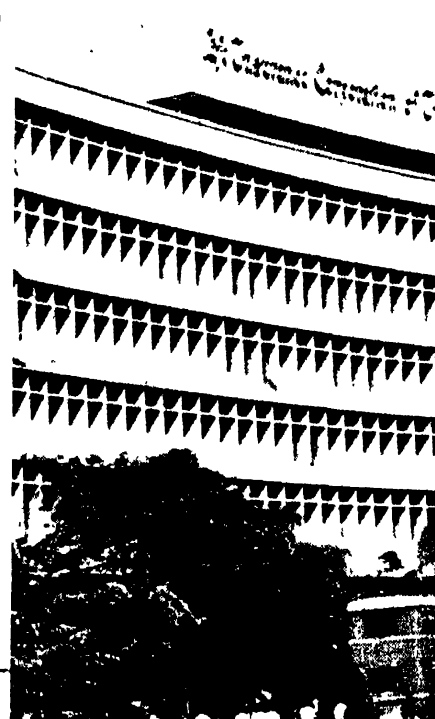
FINANCE

Joining the mutual fray

Life Insurance Corporation becomes the fourth public sector institution to launch a mutual fund

The Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) is the newest entrant in India's half-hearted mutual funds game, with the launch of its 'Dhanashree 1989' fund in mid-June. The close-ended fund—with a par value of Rs 10 per unit—guarantees a return of 12 per cent annually, and can be cashed at specified LIC branches a year after subscription. LIC is the fourth public sector institution to launch a mutual fund. Unit Trust of India (UTI) led off with its close-ended 'Mastershare' fund three years ago, with SBI Capital Markets and Canbank Financial Services following with the 'Magnum' and 'Canshare' close-ended funds respectively at the end of 1987.

Technically, mutual funds—like unit trusts—are professionally managed pools of investor money which are invested in equities or other capital market debt instruments. Close-ended



The LIC headquarters in Bombay

funds, which issue a fixed number of shares, are traded on stock exchanges with investors buying and selling their fund shares at the market price. Open-ended funds—of which none exist in India—issue additional shares as needed, and investors may redeem their holdings at market value whenever they wish.

The LIC effort suffers from the same idiosyncracies that afflict the country's other mutual funds; in India, mutual funds operate like nowhere else in the world. For one, all current funds are government-managed, with not a single private fund in sight. For another, they all offer a minimum guaranteed return (in LIC's case 12 per cent, while for other funds it is 13.5 per cent); elsewhere in the world, funds operate with the stock market roller-coaster, with returns as high as 40 per cent and more on investments. If funds were locked in fixed deposits they would earn 14 per cent, while public sector bonds offer about 13.75 per cent a year. That does not leave much money to return to the mutual fund investor, with a difference between fund earning and pay-outs varying from 0.5 to one per cent. However, these mutual funds are backed by huge war chests to take care of any earnings problem. For example, LIC has deposits exceeding Rs 19,000 crores and UTI has more than Rs 9,000 crores to dapple around in the capital markets.

**It is very likely that
'Dhanashree' will go
the way of other
mutual funds:
oversubscribed, and
contented investors at
the end of the year**

Despite the unusual traits, mutual funds have done very well here. While it is too early to gauge the response to the LIC fund, it is very likely that 'Dhanashree' will go the way of other mutual funds: oversubscribed, and contented investors at the end of the year with the guaranteed return.

A lot more needs to be done for Indian funds. For one, private funds must be allowed. The government has been toying with the idea of permitting joint and private sector funds, but nothing has come of it—although more competition would be better for the market.

Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi

TEA

Seeking the old flavour

The battered Darjeeling gardens have yet to get back to normalcy

Until recently, Darjeeling tea, traditionally acknowledged as the cup that cheers, was a cup full of tears. The three-year-long Gorkhaland agitation had badly hit the 115-year-old Darjeeling tea industry. And even nine months after the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, industrial relations in the tea gardens are volatile. Intra-party tussles in the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) are not uncommon and simmering tensions have still kept away about 10,000 workers from the tea colonies dotting the Darjeeling hills.

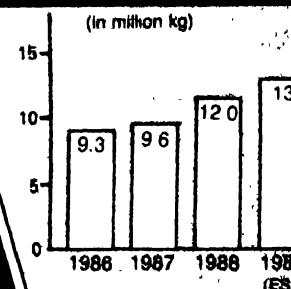
Hope, however, seems to be at hand. While inaugurating the third annual general meeting of the Darjeeling Planter's Association (DPA) at Bhanu Bhavan on 18 June, the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council chairman and GNLF supremo, Subash Ghisingh, pledged full cooperation to planters to develop the tea industry and reopen sick gardens. The Gorkha leader claimed that he knew the tea

industry "very intimately" since he was born in a tea estate and regretted the growing incidence of party politics and militant trade unionism in the gardens. And Ghisingh's personal attention, it seems, will definitely be needed to restore a semblance of peace and normalcy in the 75 tea gardens of Darjeeling. Sporadic unrest in the gardens and infrastructural problems continue to cripple production besides hampering developmental activities. Many tea gardens, for instance, are working without a telephone ever since the Nagri and Takdah exchanges were burnt down during the agitation. More disconcerting is the fact that a government circular was issued recently stating that telephone exchanges destroyed during the GNLF agitation may not be restored. The bleak scenario apart, developmental activity in Darjeeling is now

slated to get a boost. "Stagnation in production coupled with low yields," says R.K. Tripathi, chairman, Tea Board, "had set in a vicious cycle resulting in the dependence on a few purchasers who dictated the price." Tripathi adds, "The introduction of the Darjeeling inter-subsidy scheme was facing large-scale opposition as it happens with any new scheme. Today we are happy that as many as 42 gardens have availed themselves of the scheme resulting in the sanction of Rs 42 crores from NABARD (National Bank for Agri-



THE DARJEELING CRISIS



culture and Rural Development). The Tea Board has given Rs 37 lakhs as interest subsidy."

The bane of Darjeeling tea has been poor productivity. For decades the total annual production has hovered between 10 and 13 million kg—a mere 2 per cent of the total production of tea in the country. At a time when the Darjeeling logo has been accepted by packeters all over the world, the need to improve yields assumes greater importance. The Tea Board has ambitious plans to step up production from the current level of 13 million kg to 20 million kg in the near future.

The revitalisation programme has, no doubt, got off to a flying start. But it will yield results only if complete peace returns to the hills. And peace as usual remains an elusive dream—at least for the present.

Debjani Sinha/Darjeeling

Copiers to Champagne

Who said champagne was made only in France? First, Sham Chowgule, chairman of Indage India, introduced India's first champagne, 'Marquise de Pompadour'. Now, office automation leader B.K. Modi is taking up an unusual diversification. Modi Xerox is set-



B.K. Modi: Into wines

ting up a joint venture to make 3 million litres of sparkling wine at its Rs 4-crore project which will come up at NOIDA, near Delhi.

And if the French can make champagne, the Russians can make it cheaper. The sparkling wine from the Modis will be made with Russian technology which will slash prices by one-third the existing levels.

The Soviet technology is one up on the French in that it has cut the maturity period for champagne to a mere three weeks from the traditional three years.

So, not only will the Modi venture be able to turn out champagne bottles much faster, but their sparkling wine will cost a mere Rs 300 per bottle.

Mudra bids for L&T account

If Reliance has come in, can Mudra Communications be far behind? With Mudra, which handles all Reliance accounts, making a strong bid for Larsen & Toubro's Rs 2-crore advertising account, the advertising department of L&T is uncertain about its future. L&T's in-house ad department used to prepare the company's ads and release them through Raka Advertising which was owned by Jimmy Gurder of Air Freight. Gurder was at one time a director on the L&T board and the ousted chairman of L&T, Nicki Desai, had inaugurated Raka's office. It is said that Desai's family members would be provided with air tickets by Air Freight for jaunts abroad. Mudra Communications will now shortly make a presentation to Anil Ambani in a bid to bag the account which will fetch them a commission of Rs 30 lakhs annually. Since it is well known that Reliance likes to keep everything

L&T House, Bombay



within the family, L&T's advertising staff are keeping their fingers crossed about their future.

Lever has its way

The battle of attrition is finally over at Hindustan Lever's Sewree factory. Exactly after one year the lock-out was lifted at the world's largest soap factory last week. The Sewree factory lock-out became the symbol of employer militancy in Maharashtra, and most managements were keenly watching for the outcome of the tussle. And the Lever management has succeeded



Lever's Sewree factory

in extracting very vital concessions from its striking workers: only those workers will be allowed to resume work who give an undertaking assuring "commitment to the company's productivity norms" agreed upon earlier. It has also demanded "disciplined working" from its workforce. If the Lever management has finally had its way on the productivity issue, it has also succeeded in trimming the surplus workforce of about 500 men by offering an attractive golden handshake.



It began with Parveen Babi. The sexily pouting, high cheek-boned actress had to suffer the indignity of being called the poor man's Zeenat Aman for years together. Until big success put an end to such nonsense. Now, of course, things have changed so that Sonu Walia is dubbed the poor man's Parveen Babi.

If you take that as a sign of having arrived, then Meenakshi Seshadri certainly has. For, there is a Seshadri look alike making the rounds of producer's offices these days. Shikha Swaroop, Miss India 1988, not only bears a facial resemblance to the ice-maiden, but also walks and talks like her.

Shikha will be making her debut in Sibte Hasan Rizvi's *Awaaz De Kahan Hai*.

How do film stars beat the heat? By going abroad. And not at their own expense.

Sridevi:
paid holiday

DURGAPRASAD

Meenakshi Seshadri: arrived

either, kind courtesy the racket known as 'star nites'. The *modus operandi* is: some *chamcha* or the other organises a variety entertainment show abroad, and invites the matinee idols to take part. All expenses paid, of course. The stars accept the invitation with alacrity, put in a *naam ke vaste* appearance on stage to justify the money spent

on them, and then take off for fun and frolic.

This year has been no different. While Govinda and Sonam enjoyed a paid holiday in Canada, Neelam and Sridevi let down their hair in London, instead.

The Hindi film industry has had a long tradition of the flop actor turning hit director. Subhash Ghai and Shekhar Kapur, for instance, after conspicuous non-success in front of the camera, went behind it, to find name, fame and fortune.

Now, there are others

Neelam: the same old routine

who are trying the same change of tack. Vinod Mehra is producing and directing an Anil Kapoor-Sridevi starrer, while Karan Shah (remember him?) is producing *Chor Pe Mor*. And, of course, there is Mazhar Khan, who is producing and directing *Gang*, which has Sunil Dutt in the role of an underworld Don. Whether they will enjoy the same run of success, though, remains to be seen.

Nutan, like good wine, seems to get better with age. Not only does she still manage to look attractive, her acting skills are as good as ever. If not better, that is. Her recent performance in

Nutan: getting better and better
Rakesh Choudhury's tele-serial *Mujrim Haazir*, for one, had the critics raving.

To Lata Mangeshkar, work is God. Quite literally. Insiders have it that the nightingale of Hindi film playback singing never wears *chappals* while singing. Apparently, she feels that her songs are like prayers that she is offering to God, and so she sings them bare-foot.

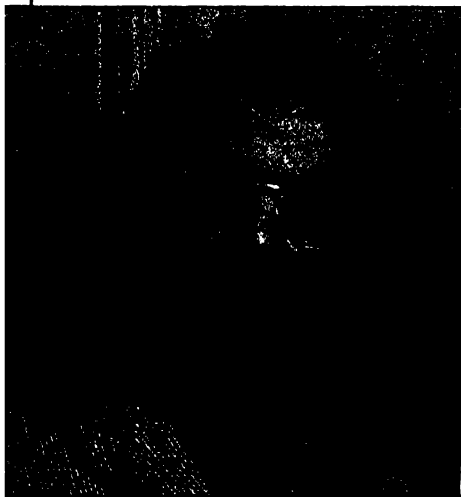
If other *filmi* types (Govinda, Vinod Khanna, Chunky Pandey, Mithun Chakraborty, et al) also begin subscribing to the maxim, 'Work is worship', producers and directors of the industry would be a far happier lot. □

RAJUL UPADHYAY

An encounter with Salman

● When is an interview with Salman Rushdie not an interview with Rushdie? When it has taken place before he went into hiding, apparently.

Two weeks ago, all of Britain woke up to an exclusive interview with the fugitive author in the tabloid *Mall* on Sunday. In it, Rushdie tore into the Iranian Revolution ("a force of evil which eats its own children"), defended *The Satanic Verses* ("Its critics haven't read it") and blamed India for banning Martin



Salman Rushdie: the interview that wasn't Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* ("It hasn't been banned in Christian countries").

In other words, pretty much your standard Rushdie interview. But did this mean that after months in hiding, the great man held exactly the same views as before he scurried for cover?

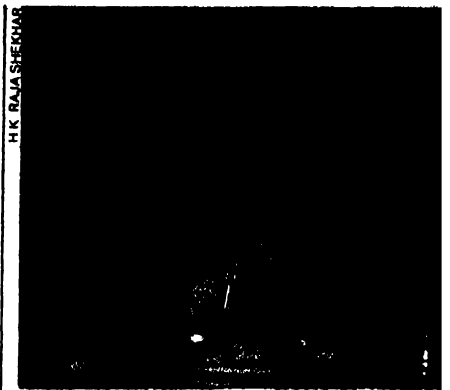
Not quite. It turned out that Rushdie had given the interview months ago and the *Mall* on Sunday had failed to mention this. Sure enough an angry Rushdie put out a wordy statement denouncing the *Mall*, calling it "irresponsible" and threatening to sue.

So at least, some things haven't changed.

This is the Prime Minister

● The Opposition has suffered the brunt of Rajiv Gandhi's (sometimes questionable) sense of humour. Not to mention his occasional reasoned attacks: "The only slogan the Opposition had was the removal of Mrs Indira Gandhi. When they did not succeed in this, they decided to eliminate her physically." And again: "Every single office-bearer of the National Front was a history-sheeter with charges of rape, corruption and murder against him."

Now, the Janata Dal, at the instance of Ramakrishna Hegde, has compiled Rajiv's words of wisdom into a book titled, *Rajiv Gandhi—An Introduction*. Each quotation has beside it, the name of the newspaper and the date on which it appeared. And the former chief minister is right to take no chances. Not when there is such



Hegde: from the Prime Minister's mouth potentially damaging stuff as: "Women's rights are a Western concept", "He (Jyoti Basu) needs someone to hold his hand", "Our labour is perhaps the most inefficient in the world", and much more in the same vein.

Little wonder then, that the publication is being handed out along with "the best compliments of Ramakrishna Hegde".

Epic distortion

● Question: Was Sita banished by Rama or did she chose to leave Ayodhya on her own?

On the answer to that one hinges the fate of Ramanand Sagar's tele-serial *Uttar Ramayan*. For Justice K.J. Shetty, vacation judge of the Supreme Court, has decreed that no further telecast of the serial is possible, until a three-member committee, comprising Hindi and Sanskrit scholars, reviews the remaining episodes to ensure that "there is no distortion" of the epic.

The government's argument that

the veracity of the story was the producer's business, and that it had no brief to intercede in this connection, was thrown out summarily. Shetty maintained: "Doordarshan, which is owned by the gov-





Siddhartha Basu: at it again

Quiz time, again

● Come September and Siddhartha Basu will be at it again. The show: *The India Quiz*. The TV slot: 9 pm every Sunday night. And facing Basu's quick-fire questions will be a group of successful professionals who have achieved fame in their fields of work—medicine, administration, journalism, defence, architecture, banking, television, and several others besides.

The questions will be on 20th century India and Basu hastens to assure us that they will be "easily accessible" and "familiar enough, so that the people are not left cold". Hosting the show along with Basu will be TV newsreader Komal G.B. Singh. (Eat your heart out, Vandana Mohan.)

Invitations have already gone out to "young achievers", but Basu fights shy of naming them. None of them, apparently, are game.

ernment, must see that there is no distortion of the epics. Even in the case of costumes there should be no distortion."

So perhaps, in the near future, we won't see Sita's high heels peeking out from beneath her sari. And maybe, the Estee Lauder make-up will go too.

The banishment of Sita: whose decision was it, anyway?



Clean sweep

● New brooms sweep clean. And so do Governors, apparently. At least, if they are Serla Grewal.

About the first thing Grewal did, after moving into the Madhya Pradesh Raj Bhavan, was to get in touch with the Environment Planning Protection Coordination Organisation (EPPCO), and draw up a plan to clean up Bhopal Lake. And true to her go-getting style, Serla ensured that work began in right earnest almost immediately, with members of the state bureaucracy turning up at the waterside to supervise Operation Clean-up, and score a few points with Governor Grewal in the bargain. Some enthusiastic souls, it is reported, even got right into the thick of things, wading knee-deep into the lake to pull out an offending weed or two.

Serla Grewal: new broom



True confessions

● When Rajiv Gandhi took over as Prime Minister most political pundits pronounced him too green to be much good. Now his sister-in-law Menaka Gandhi confesses to being green too. In a recent interview to *Newsweek*, Menaka disclosed why she was in politics. "I am here," she said, "because I think environmental issues should be mainstream politics. I feel very deeply about environmental protection. By conviction I am a Green."



Menaka Gandhi: with the wisdom of hindsight

Green or not, Menaka has certainly learnt her political lessons well. "With the wisdom of hindsight," she went on, "I can say now that the Emergency rule was a dreadful thing." Does that mean that the younger Gandhi *bahu* is repudiating her Sanjay heritage?

Be that as it may, there's no denying that such honest confessions are bound to go down well with the Indian public, in an election year.



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প্রবাসী আনন্দবাজার

Wedded to wealth

Marriages are fast becoming an occasion to flaunt money power

It was the wedding of the decade. For the privileged invitees, the 17 May evening will remain etched in their minds for a very long time. As for those who were not invited, the next day's newspapers and tabloids were full of the lavish details: most of Bombay's posh hotels were booked in advance, chartered flights brought in guests from all over the country, the city's public transport system was thrown off gear as most of the taxis were requisitioned to carry the guests and, above all, the wide variety of expensive dishes served during the ceremony. Everyone agreed that the marriage of Kumaramangalam, Aditya Birla's son, with Nirja, daughter of Shambhukumar Kasliwal of the S. Kumar's business group, was the most impressive occasion in recent memory.

But the taxmen obviously were not amused. Newspaper reports on the extravagant Birla wedding attracted the attention of the Bombay income-tax authorities. The marriage over—and after the guests had left—the income-tax department ordered a probe to find out how much had indeed been spent. According to an income-tax official, the investigation is nothing unusual. In fact, there is a provision in the Income-Tax Act (Section 133-A-5) which empowers the department to curb extravagant expenditure. In the case of the Birlas, however, the authorities are trying to find out if any portion of the marriage expenses was debited to the Birla group of companies.

Though newspaper reports suggest that around Rs 5 crores was spent on the Birla-Kumar marriage, income-tax sleuths are yet to verify the expenditure. The investigation has been somewhat slow as hotels like Leela Penta, Oberoi and Taj are yet to work out the bills for the Birlas.

The special tax provision to check extravagant expenditure during mar-

riages and other social ceremonies was enacted some ten years back when it was found that wealthy businessmen were utilising such occasions to spend black money. The usual procedure is that the tax authorities receive programmes of parties from five-star hotels and

other community halls well in advance. The authorities then decide which ones have to be investigated. However, the tax laws make it clear that all investigations are to be carried out after the ceremony; no one is to be harassed during the function. But a section of tax

officials feels that this provision hampers their investigation as, often, hoteliers connive with their clients and make out bills which are much less than the actual expenses. The tax officials can do little in such cases as their sole source of information is the hotel's cash register.

There are other problems, too, that IT officials face, like accounting gifts. The marriage of liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya is a case in point. After the ceremony, Mallya declared that his wife had received gold jewellery as gifts from his dealers worth Rs 22 lakhs. But during raid on Mallya during the Shaw Wallace take-over drama, tax officials seized gold worth Rs 14 lakhs from him.

And in spite of Mallya maintaining that these were received by him as gifts, the IT officials insisted that the gold was part of Mallya's business profits.

But, despite such instances of harassment, the rich of Bombay are least bothered. Marriages have become status symbols and an occasion to flaunt one's wealth. A whole lot of small-scale industries have come up in Bombay to cater to the needs of the wealthy.

Take the business of catering, for instance. Even a few years ago this was the domain of the Gujaratis. Today, with the increasing demand for better and exotic food, Punjabis and Sindhis have come up in a big way. Decorators too are making brisk business with many big names involved in the trade. A diamond merchant who got married recently transported 40,000 flower pots from Bangalore to decorate the Somani School compound at Cuffe Parade.

Oiga Telis / Bombay



Kumaramangalam weds Nirja: ostentatious ceremony

Marriages have become status symbols and an occasion to flaunt one's wealth. A diamond merchant who got married recently transported 40,000 flower pots from Bangalore to Bombay just to decorate his house

Distorting history

For H.M. Seervai, Gandhi is the villain of the Partition saga

Perhaps, for generations to come, Indians will continue to feel nostalgic about a pre-Independent united India. They are in search of a satisfactory answer to the question: who and what caused the Partition? This search becomes more agonising because it was generally presumed that the Partition would bury the ghost of communalism. But this was not to be. A most provocative contribution to this question has been made by an astute legal luminary, H.M. Seervai, in his book, *Partition of India: Legend and Reality*.

Seervai's treatise gives a jolt to the reader since it portrays Jinnah as a hero and Gandhi as a villain. He repeatedly asserts that "it was the Congress which insisted on Partition and it was Jinnah who was against it"; after the mid-Twenties "Gandhi had lost interest in Hindu-Muslim unity"; "it was Gandhi who introduced religion into politics;" and many other similar sweeping statements.

Seervai has been analysing the subject of Partition as though he were arguing a legal suit. Like any clever lawyer he makes use of facts selectively. For those who are not well-versed in pre-Partition developments, Seervai's case looks very convincing. But those who are conversant with the Partition story can easily find flaws in his case. One such loophole has been found by Rajmohan Gandhi from whose book, *Eight Lives*, Seervai quotes extensively. Gandhi pointed out that Seervai virtually misquoted M.C. Setalvad concerning Mahatma Gandhi's response to an abortive Bhulabhai-Liaquat Ali pact.

Seervai's story starts from the mid-Twenties when Gandhi mixed religion with politics. Yes, Gandhi did it in his Non-Cooperation Movement when he simultaneously took up the cause of the

Khilafat. But after the Twenties, Gandhi never, never, mixed religion with politics. The usage of idioms like Ram Rajya did not evoke any divisive religious sentiments. It was meant to cultivate ethical values. Even on a topic like cow slaughter—a sensitive issue for Hindus—Gandhi always tried to assuage feelings. "I have never sympathised with the Hindu grief and the implied anger against the *Mussulmans* on Bakr-Id. The latter are undoubtedly foolish and obstinate in that they slaughter the cow and needlessly wound Hindu susceptibility."

However, the unkindest cut by Seervai is that while accusing the Mahatma of

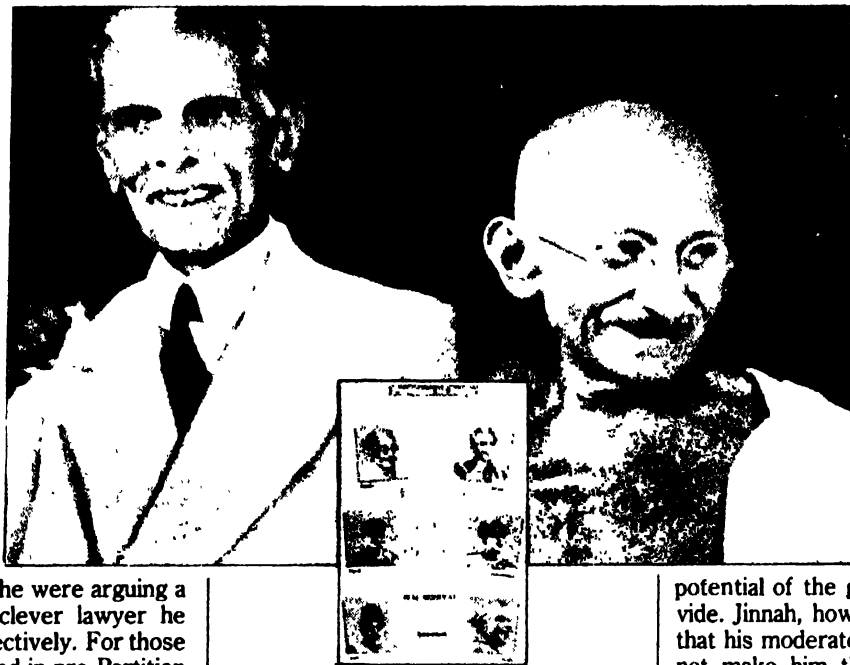
mixing religion with politics, he gives almost a clean chit to Jinnah on this score.

Like any ordinary student of history, Seervai maintains that the seeds of Partition were sown in 1937 when the Congress refused to form a coalition with the Muslim League in UP. A deeper study of the 1937 episode could at best produce an answer: "Perhaps it was one of those lost moments of history." But nothing more than "perhaps". It would be foolhardy to be definitive.

Much has been said on why 1937 was a case of missed opportunity. Let's see

the other side. By 1937, the Congress and the Muslim League saw that they were incompatible. The Congress did not accept the communal award whereas the Muslim League viewed it as the fulfilment of its long-drawn struggle. The Congress also had reservations on a separate communal award. Even before 1937, no less a person than Allama Iqbal had mooted the idea of Pakistan.

The 1937 elections showed the potential of the great Hindu-Muslim divide. Jinnah, however, was disillusioned that his moderate communal politics did not make him the uncrowned king of Muslims as, he thought, Gandhi had become among the Hindus. Jinnah's Muslim League won only 108 out of a total of 485 seats reserved for Muslims. He therefore decided on a new strategy to exploit the potential of the Hindu-Muslim divide to his advantage. He insisted that the Muslim League should be recognised as the authoritative voice of the Muslims. Within three months of the failure of talks on the coalition government in UP, Jinnah made his famous Lucknow speech, "Islam is in danger under the Congress Raj as Congress Raj is a Hindu Raj." The speech was so provocative that Gandhi called it a



Seervai's treatise gives a jolt to the reader since it portrays Jinnah as a hero and Gandhi as a villain. He repeatedly asserts that "it was the Congress which insisted on Partition and it was Jinnah who was against it"

"declaration of war". The Muslim League followed it up by a high-pitched campaign against "atrocities against Muslims in Congress-ruled states". When the Congress ministries resigned in 1940, Jinnah called upon the Muslims to celebrate the occasion as a "day of deliverance". When Gandhi approached Jinnah to find a solution, Jinnah replied that talks could take place only on a "if you accept I represent Muslims and you represent Hindus" basis.

One of the most facile assumptions of Seervai is that Jinnah resorted to an extremist posture as he was hurt by Nehru's criticism that the League lacked "inherent strength". In politics, criticism and counter-criticism are part of the game. If criticism deflects a politician from the pursuit of his basic objective, he is certainly a poor leader. But Jinnah was certainly not such a bad politician. In 1937, Jinnah realised that his moderate communal politics did not take him very far. He started arousing religious passions among Muslims in order to broaden his support base. The logic that "Islam is in danger under the Congress Raj" caused him to drift towards the idea of Pakistan.

From 1937, Seervai jumps to the Cabinet Mission Plan to prove his pre-determined hypothesis that it was the Congress which wanted Pakistan and not Jinnah. The only deviation from the "fashion of the day" he makes is that he accuses Gandhi and not Jawaharlal Nehru for scuttling the Plan. There is no doubt that the Congress felt most uncomfortable with the Plan. It had strong suspicions that Jinnah would use it as a stepping stone for the creation of Pakistan. But Jinnah also accepted the Plan half-heartedly, without renouncing his final objective of achieving a sovereign Pakistan. Jinnah had tasted blood. His strategy to play up religious sentiments paid rich political dividends when, in the 1946 elections, the Muslim League secured 86.6 per cent of votes cast in Muslim reserve constituencies. He started dreaming of Pakistan. A section of the British bureaucracy was also giving him encouragement. He wanted some excuse to wriggle out of the Plan.

Seervai feels that it was the Congress's refusal to accept the principle of Hindu-Muslim parity which was the root cause of Partition. Since its birth the Congress had been bending over backwards to accommodate communal demands, primarily of Muslims. This process climaxed in the 1916 Congress-League Lucknow pact on separate communal electorates. But it was soon discovered that instead of containing communalism, it was legitimising and

institutionalising it. In the Nehru report in 1928 on the Constitution of an Independent India, the Congress sought to abolish separate electorates but provided for reservation of seats. Jinnah was inclined to accept the Nehru report but militant Muslim communal leaders forced him to reject it.

The trouble with Seervai is that he has investigated the problem purely from a legalistic point of view. At best he sees the drama of Pakistan as a game of chess by politicians. He does not appreciate the fact that in the Forties, many people of the sub-continent had become active participants in the political process. In that situation any false step by the leadership of the Congress would have led to its repudiation by the masses. Even in 1928, Jinnah could make the Muslim League accept the Nehru Plan which sought to abolish separate electorates. By the Forties, most unfortunately, Jinnah's slogan of Pakistan had caught the imagination of

Raj in Independent India was "genuine". He is emphatic: "That the fears of the Muslim community were genuine is beyond doubt." But he does not care to answer how the formation of Pakistan would have assuaged the fears of Muslims in UP and Bihar, who under no scheme could have been part of Pakistan. Most surprisingly, the Muslims of UP were the strongest supporters of Pakistan even though they were "condemned" to live under the "Hindu Raj". We have seen, most recently in Iran, that when irrational religious fervour grips the mind of the people, they behave in an insane manner. Muslim fears were not "genuine". It was a most perverted perception of reality.

However, if one's mind is poisoned, nobody can help him see the reality. Who can help Seervai if he compares Jinnah's call of "Direct Action" in 1946 with Gandhi's Direct Action of 1921, 1931 and 1942. "The League used exactly the same techniques used by the

Congress in their agitation in 1921 and 1931." Calling upon Muslims to observe "Direct Action Day" on 16 August, 1946, Jinnah said: "Today, we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it." As it turned out Jinnah's "Direct Action" was directed against Hindus and the pistol was used against Hindus, not against the alien rulers. All three of Gandhi's "Direct Actions" were directed against the Britishers and



The Cabinet Mission: did Gandhi scuttle the plan?

the Muslim masses. He was riding a tiger, and if he had tried to dismount, the tiger would have devoured him. After attaining Pakistan, he tried to impose his subjective will by declaring that Pakistan would be secular.

Perhaps an answer to the question, "who and what caused the Partition" is beyond the scope of a legalistic mind. It requires a multi-disciplinary approach to analyse social, political, religious and economic factors which encouraged communalisation of the Indian psyche, particularly, the Muslim mind even when people of this country were engaged in the struggle for Independence. In a most confused manner Seervai tries to answer this question. He says that the Muslim fear of a "Hindu

the active phases of those direct actions witnessed total communal harmony. Jinnah's Direct Action of 16 August, 1946 saw the worst Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta. Seervai's book is not an isolated instance. There is a systematic campaign to destroy the faith of the people in the tradition of Indian nationalism. It is not an attempt to point out the weaknesses of nationalism. If Jinnah is portrayed as a hero and Gandhi a villain, it is aimed at total destruction of the foundations of Indian nationalism. Hopefully, Indian nationalism is strong enough to survive the onslaught from misguided, self-proclaimed historians.

Kewal Varma

Partition of India: Legend and Reality by H M Seervai
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It is often argued that Indian society, as compared to many developing and developed countries, is markedly spiritual and the people less given to violence. The growing incidence of dowry deaths and domestic violence flatly contradicts this view. All the cases in our sample are reported cases of dowry harassment and have been filed under Section 498A IPC. This chapter attempts to analyse the different forms of harassment.

Degree of fulfilment of dowry

But for the financial constraints in most of the cases, the parents, if they had the resources, would be ever willing to meet the continuing demands made by the husband's family, provided he keeps the daughter in his house. As he begins to ill-treat his wife, her parents, instead of removing her from that situation, begin to struggle, often desperately, to find ways and means of raising money in order to please him. In cases where the girl's parents have been unable to redeem the situation in any manner, they have given shelter to their daughters out of sheer desperation. Table A shows the extent to which post-marriage demands have been met in a sample of 141 cases (nine had been burnt alive even before the dissatisfaction of the in-laws and husbands for whatever reasons, had been communicated to the parents). One should keep in mind the fact that in all these cases the girl had not come "empty handed" or even with a "less prestigious dowry" than the status requirements.

It is evident that 10.6 per cent of the cases had fully met the demand, 31.2 per cent had partially met the demand and 19.8 per cent had promised to comply with the demand in due course. All these cases reflect the untiring efforts of parents to appease the groom and in-laws so that their daughter is not thrown out of the house no matter what her condition is. There were 38.4 per cent cases who did not meet the demand because of constraints and were in the process of trying to resolve the problems and to negotiate on grounds which were "less costly."

What happens after the parents react to the demands in this manner i.e., refuse to meet the fresh demands for dowry? Does a big dowry automatically guarantee better treatment of the girl? As Table B shows, the answer is sadly no.

In the case of those (10.6 per cent) who fully met the fresh demands, their daughters were accepted back by the grooms. This reflects a conditional

DOWRY DEATHS

THE HUMAN FACE OF THE TRAGEDY

*What kind of a family burns its daughter-in-law?
Some real-life case studies*



acceptance of the girl. In these cases the position which the women occupy in the house has been literally purchased. In some instances (31.2 per cent) the parents were in a position to pay/give only a part of what was being demanded. However, this did not ensure a place for their daughter in her matrimonial house. Only two were accepted after bringing partial dowry. As many as 36 of them (26.5 per cent) were sent back to their natal home and asked to come with more; and five of them (3.3 per cent) were killed.

In 38.4 per cent cases, the initial marriage expenses had been so disproportionate to the parents' economic status that it had led to their economic ruin. Beyond this point they were not in a position to give even marginally what was being demanded afresh. Failure to bring the demanded dowry led to 51 of the 55 such cases being deserted and three being killed or driven to commit suicide. Parents of the deserted girls



But for the financial constraints, the parents in most cases are even willing to meet the continuing demands made by the husband's family, provided he keeps the daughter in his house

have only reluctantly accepted them as they have other commitments too. In 19.8 per cent cases, even promises could not save the daughter. Mindful of a society ever ready to unsheath its claws, parents are desperate to return the girl, even if they have to "beg, borrow or steal" to do so. However, since there is no guarantee of the sum being paid, 25 out of 28 were deserted and three killed or driven to commit suicide.

Often the girl is taken back only to give the in-laws the opportunity to further blackmail her parents. Table C corroborates the fact that in many cases harassment and torture did not cease or even decrease after partial or total fulfilment of demands.

It is noteworthy that in 37.3 per cent cases where the parents had fulfilled

the demands fully or partially, demand for more dowry continued. In spite of meeting the demand 6.8 per cent of them were killed or driven to commit suicide. There were 52.5 per cent who did not make demands any further.

Dowry tensions given other names

During the course of this study, we uncovered: a) the deliberate torture of young wives specifically related to dowry; and b) the torture of wives by husbands or in-laws who tend to blame more complex family problems on the supposed inadequacy of dowry. The exact ratio of the latter to the former is difficult to determine, for the wife is seldom aware of what is happening around her or why she is being ill-treated. She accepts it as a right of the husband.

However, there were responses where dowry was not cited as the sole or even major cause of tension.

It is striking to note that in the case of 50 per cent of dowry victims who are alive, marital discord is attributed not to dowry demands as such, but to other tensions in the family. These include allegations by the wife that her husband is impotent (9.8 per cent). In some cases (7.1 per cent) the wife alleged that her husband had extra-marital relations. Shockingly, in as many as 7.1 per cent cases the victims alleged that on many occasions the father-in-law or brother-in-law or uncle-in-law had made overtures and on refusal to oblige them, started all sorts of harassment. Conversely, in 5.4 per cent cases, the husband and in-laws alleged that the girl was continuing her relations with her old paramour. There are also cases (19.7 per cent) where husbands were alcoholics and drug addicts and resistance from the wife often led to tension in the family.

The responses of the in-laws and of the parents of the dead dowry victims are more revealing. The in-laws or husbands of 52.6 per cent of the dead victims alleged that the girl had extra-marital relations, whereas in 21.1 per cent cases, the parents of the dead victim said that the husband of the victim had extra-marital relations and upon objections being voiced by their daughter, she was finally done away with. In 7.9 per cent cases, they alleged that the daughter was murdered because she refused to oblige the overtures made by the father-in-law. Only 18.4 per cent felt that their daughter was murdered or driven to commit suicide because of their inability to meet the dowry demands.

ILLUSTRATION SUBMITTED BY GANGAPADHYAY

Table A**Degree of fulfillment of dowry demanded after marriage**

Degree	Frequency	Per cent
Fully	15	10.6
Partially	44	31.2
Promised to	28	19.8
Not met with	54	38.4
Total	141	100.6

Table B**Correlation between fulfillment of demand and desertion or acceptance**

Degree of fulfillment	Frequency		Deserted		Accepted		Killed	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Fully	15	10.6	0	—	14	10.6	—	—
Partially	44	31.2	36	25.6	3	2.1	5	3.5
Promised	28	19.8	25	17.7	—	—	3	2.1
Not at all	54	38.4	51	36.3	—	—	3	2.1
Total	141	100.0	112	79.6	17	12.7	11	7.7

Table C**Degree of harassment after demands were partly or fully fulfilled**

Degree	Frequency	%
Increased	22	37.3
Decreased	2	3.4
Did not demand	31	52.5
Killed	4	6.8
Total	59	100.0

Table D**Frequency of tensions other than dowry**

Tensions	Allive cases		Dead cases	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Impotency of the male	11	9.8	—	—
Extra-marital relations of the husband	8	7.1	8	21.1
Extra-marital relations of the wife	6	5.4	20	52
Alcoholism and drug addiction	22	19.7	—	—
Overtures by the brother-in-law, father-in-law or other male members in the family	8	7.1	3	7.9
Only dowry	57	50.9	7	18.4
Total	112	100	38	100

Forms of harassment

We shall not attempt to define what exactly is meant by harassment and cruelty, since they are largely subjective terms. At best, some of their physical manifestations like death or injury to body are cognisable. What is more important is that it must be recognised.

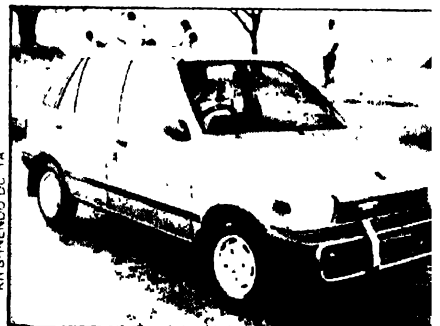
The general forms in which typical harassment of a woman in her husband's family unfolds itself are taunts, abuses, threats, which generally escalate into beating and even abetment to suicide or

murder in some cases. However, what remains hidden from us are the experiences of women battered by their husbands—for reasons of inadequacy of dowry or some other. These are viewed by the police as cases of domestic assault and by the society as "normal interaction among intimate couples". Blinded by the patriarchal notions about the privacy of family matters and because of their assumed weakness, women seldom choose to get out of these relationships or even complain about them. Not surprisingly, researches on women have found that wife-

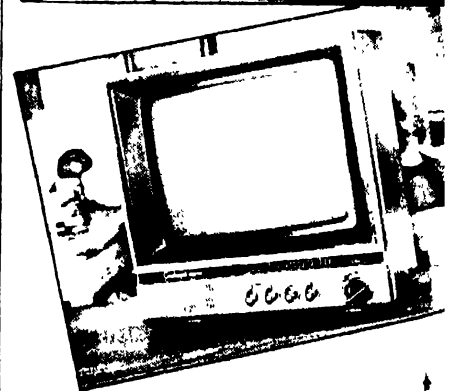
beating is perhaps the most under-reported crime.

Our survey shows that in 78 per cent of the sample cases, the daughters-in-law/wives were subjected to physical assault almost every second day. For days, months and even years, women are caught in the web of violence, unable to predict when more violence will occur. Keeping relationships together, despite violence, is also important for practical reasons such as financial support and shelter. Getting out is almost as bad as staying in the relationship. "Women stay within these situations," says Elizabeth A. Stanke, "because of real conditions of their lives in a male-dominated world. The threat of male violence outside the home is an acutely intimidating reality of women who endure violence within their own homes." Living with the constant threat of being killed and desertion becomes a daily ordeal for them. In as many as 57 per cent of the cases the woman had been threatened to be killed and in 71 per cent, to be deserted.

The woman does not have even one sympathiser in her marital home. The mother-in-law phobia still persists today. The resentment against the daughter-in-law is so great for some inexplicable reason (one cannot explain the whole syndrome in terms of possessiveness of the mother) that she goes out of her way to bring untold misery to her daughter-in-law. The husband seldom protests. On the contrary, in our study, in 88 per cent of the cases the husband was an



KRISHNENDU DUTTA



active participant. The married sister visiting her natal place frequently also joined her mother in harassing the girl.

Material greed is often intertwined with a complex of emotional tensions, which perhaps became all the more virulent as they occurred in a society little given to psychological introspection. Indian conjugal relationships are typically much less close than those between mother and son: frequently the mother-in-law instigates the harassment against the young bride using her son as her agent. The actual or supposed inadequacy of dowry becomes an excuse for the mother-in-law.

On the slightest pretext the bride is sent back to her parental home—usually to refurbish her “inadequate” dowry. And then, the quality and quantity of whatever she gets from her parents are made an excuse for further harassment.

On the other extreme are some families where the girl is discouraged from frequently visiting her parents. Her isolation from her natal source of support is complete. Should she be maltreated, it is unlikely that anyone would come to her help. Even if she is murdered, the evidence can easily be destroyed because none is likely to testify on her behalf.



The general forms in which harassment for more dowry unfolds are taunts, abuses, threats, which generally escalate into beating and even abetment to suicide or murder in some cases

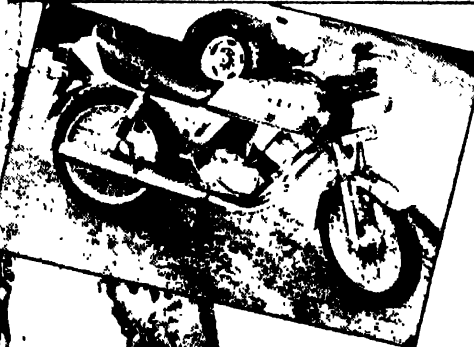
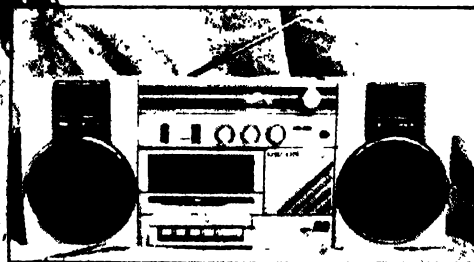
A few case studies of dowry victims

The nature of dowry harassments and tortures would be better understood through a few detailed case studies. The reader is left to draw his own conclusions.

Case Study 1

A man accused of forcing his young wife to end her life by self-immolation within a year of their marriage has been denied bail by the sessions court of Delhi. The accused, Raja, (of Dariba Kalan in the walled city area) and his family members had allegedly taunted and harassed Bobi for bringing insufficient dowry. The victim took the extreme step of killing herself.

Neelam Jain who was pushed from the balcony of her Calcutta residence: a dowry victim; some of the articles normally demanded from a bride's family



The applicant had earlier sought bail on the ground that it was the family of the girl who had “exploited her mentally and sexually before her marriage”. It was her murky past which she was not able to forget, the accused pleaded...

Bobi had been married at the age of 17 on 27 June, 1985. She did not commit suicide; she was burnt on 14 June, 1986, for bringing insufficient dowry. Bobi comes from a Brahmin family. She lived with her parents in a small ramshackle two-room house in Malivada. Her sister and brother, both married, lived separately. Their father was bed-ridden and the only earning member of the family was Bobi's mother who cooked in five houses and earned Rs 350. The marriage was fixed by one of her mother's employers. During the negotiations, no demands had been made except the insistence of the marriage being held at a hotel. This woman who earned Rs 350 a month had to arrange for a marriage in Moti Mahal restaurant which cost her about Rs 12,000.

Right at the time of marriage, i.e., just before the *phasas*, the drunken groom Raja started misbehaving and demanded Rs 10,000. Bobi's mother had given Bobi and Raja all the jewellery and gifts within her reach; 75 utensils, 65 *saris* and the expenses of a marriage in a hotel. Anyway after much pleading the bride was whisked away in a taxi, the marriage ceremony left incomplete. Soon after the marriage, it was found out that the boy was neither employed, nor earned Rs 1500 per month, and was not a graduate as had been told to Bobi's family. The boy wanted to set up a business and constantly demanded Rs 10,000 from Bobi's family. When told that they couldn't afford it, he gave them the solution of selling their house.

During the one year that Bobi stayed alive after her marriage, not once was she left unescorted or unguarded—either it was her sister-in-law or Raja's brother or their children or Raja himself. The three or four times that she came home, it was for only half an hour, which was considered long enough to ask for Rs 10,000. Not once, says Bobi's mother, did she see Bobi wear any of the jewellery that she had given her. Not once was Bobi allowed or given the opportunity to tell her mother or her friends about her misery and the brutal torture that she was undergoing. On 14 June, 1986, Bobi—as was reported by a neighbour—was tied with a rope, thrown in the courtyard, beaten till she bled and all her teeth fell out, and then set on fire. Her screams could be heard by the neighbours. They were all witnesses to it. Yet they were deafened and

made impotent by the hassles that would ensue if they protested.

Bobi died at 10 in the morning. Her parents got to know of it at 4 in the evening. The police and doctors at the hospital would not let her mother see the dead body. To date she hasn't had a glimpse of her daughter's dead body. More than six months have passed, but nothing has happened. The case is registered at one of the women's organisations; there hasn't been any reply. It is told that the case is registered as "abetment to suicide." Newspaper reports say that bail wasn't granted. But Raja and his family are leading normal unperturbed lives. In fact, Raja has married again. Bobi's father, who was sick, could not bear the shock. He too died. Bobi's mother is alone now, hoping for some justice.

Case Study 2

Jamuni was married at the age of 16. She is 18 now. A year back she poured kerosene on herself and tried to commit suicide. Her father is a wrestling coach and is employed in the Railway Mail Service. He earns Rs 1,500 a month. He spent about Rs 45,000 for Jamuni's wedding.

Jamuni's husband Ramesh and her in-laws were satisfied with the dowry she had brought initially. However, tensions other than dowry-related existed from the very beginning. Ramesh was an alcoholic and would often beat up Jamuni in his drunken state demanding more dowry. The demands were for a scooter. After Jamuni got pregnant, her brother-in-law and mother-in-law harassed her. In her own words:

I was about seven months pregnant, my husband just beat me with a leather strap and then with a stick and his elder brother pushed me and threw me on the ground and my husband sat on my body, and beat me cruelly. Then my mother-in-law and sister-in-law all shouted "kill her", "get rid of her", we will get you another wife and will get you very big and nice articles of dowry. She is the daughter of a kangal—beggar. The result of it is that I developed pain. All my cries and wails had no effect. When the pain became too severe, I was taken to hospital where an immature and completely paralytic son was born on 16 June, 1985, at 8.15 am. Despite all possible efforts by the doctor he did not survive. The infant died on 17 June, 1985 at about 9.00 pm. They did not inform my parents of this episode. My parents were informed on 18 June, in the morning when the dead body was recovered from the hospital. From there I came to my parents' house where I stayed till 6 July, 1985.

Case Study 3

Twenty-two-year-old Shashi died on 6 June, 1986, not even four months after she married Rakesh. Shashi was the only daughter of Shikari Lal, a retired army officer who now runs a small grocery shop. Shashi's parents were Brahmins. They were not happy when Shashi expressed her desire to marry Rakesh who was a regular visitor to their neighbour's house. One of the major reasons was that Rakesh and his family were Aroras—basically a middle caste family. They ultimately bowed to the insistence of their only daughter and gave their consent. The marriage took place on 13 February, 1986.

The marriage was held at the residence of Shikari Lal despite the insistence of the groom's family of the wedding being held at a hotel. The income from the shop was not much. However, because of social expectations, Shikari Lal hosted a lavish wedding and gave Shashi all that "befits" a good dowry—double bed, dining table, sofa, dressing table, almirah, jewellery and so forth. There were no specific demands but what was expected of Shikari Lal had been made rather clear.

Rakesh belonged to a wealthy family. Probably that was the reason why Shashi's father agreed in the first place to the marriage. The family owned a printing press which gave them a comfortable income. His family was a joint one comprising his parents, three brothers and their wives. After marriage, however, Rakesh and Shashi shifted to a DDA flat in Govindpuri which Rakesh had bought and strangely was in the joint name of both Rakesh and Shashi. However, the two had their meals, etc., with the joint family itself.

Considering it was a love marriage, the girl should have been more at ease with her husband. From the beginning itself Shashi, however, faced the usual traumas of a young unsure bride. Taunts and insults regarding inadequate clothes, jewellery, etc., were constantly flung at her, so much so that all her new clothes had been confiscated and she was sent home to get her old clothes.

During the four months that Shashi stayed with her husband, she was seldom given the opportunity to meet her parents alone. From whatever her parents could gather, their daughter was undergoing both physical and mental torture. However, the specific demands were never made clear. It was simply an issue which was used to subject Shashi to harassment. On 4 June, 1986, Shashi, the police report says, burnt herself at her residence in the Govindpuri. She had, it seems, shut herself in the



(Clockwise from above) The father-in-law of a dowry victim in Delhi being led off by the police; Shabana Azmi addressing the Anti-Dowry Committee of the Priyadarshini Academy, Bombay; an anti-dowry protest rally in Delhi



Sometimes the isolation of the bride from her parents is complete. Even if she is murdered, the evidence can be easily destroyed because no one is likely to testify on her behalf

bathroom and set herself on fire. She was admitted to the hospital with third degree burns and succumbed to her burns on 6 June, 1986.

The first statement that was recorded by the doctor read 'accidental burns while cooking'. The second statement which was taken, in the presence of the additional district magistrate was to the effect that Shashi had committed suicide by pouring oil and setting herself on fire. The third of her declarations, and unofficial one, was in front of her neighbours who say that Shashi admitted to them that she had been burnt and was threatened with the murder of her father if she dared speak the truth. According to investigations by the Kalkaji police station, the incident had taken place in the bathroom. So the first of her statements to the doctor stands negated



because nobody cooks in the bathroom, and also because the practice of the family eating together had been followed even on that fatal day. There was seldom any cooking done at their residence. Had Shashi committed suicide, there wouldn't have been any need for her three conflicting and contradictory statements before she died. Considering these factors, it hardly seems probable that Shashi committed suicide. *The case, however, with the police is registered as abetment to suicide.*

There are some other enlightening factors. Any crime under Section 307 CrPC (abetment to suicide) is a non-bailable offence. In this case not just a bail, but an *anticipatory bail*, was granted to Rakesh and his family as a result of which they were not arrested even for formalities' sake. More important, for

what had they taken anticipatory bail? Could it not be taken to imply that they had planned it all?

Case Study 4

Soni now lives with her parents in Greater Kailash. She has a BA degree in History from Delhi University and is "fair, homely, well turned out, convent educated..."—just the type of girl the matrimonial ads are looking for. Her father has a roaring family business; so money was no constraint in his daughter's marriage. Soni got married to an equally educated boy and into an equally wealthy family. The marriage took place in January 1985 in a five-star hotel and Soni's dowry was in keeping with the family's status. (The exact nature of the dowry was not disclosed

because a case for the resumption of *streedhan* is registered with the anti-dowry cell and her parents were hesitant.)

Despite being educated and less submissive to an extent, after marriage the control over her jewellery, clothes and other items was assumed by Soni's mother-in-law. After her honeymoon, Soni returned to her in-laws' place to face a bickering and insulting mother-in-law. The family, as Soni understood, was suffering a major setback in business. This loss had been compounded by her sister-in-law's wedding for which her in-laws had spent a lot of money.

This money had to be recovered. The business had to be put back on its feet. The easiest source of money without interest—and non-refundable—was Soni. A demand for Rs 25,000 was made. Soni was told that she was not given a fair share of her family property. She was asked to get her share. The most innovative of their ideas was that Soni should get her parents to insure her. This is a clear indication of the intention of these oppressors. Soni was virtually imprisoned in her in-laws' place. Her husband was an active participant. She was beaten, abused, threatened with desertion almost every day. She sought her parents' help who went to a women's organisation. They, however, did not seek police assistance because they still wanted to save the marriage and feared that police intervention might be a drastic step and could worsen things. Their attempts, however, failed. After a year of her marriage Soni was turned out of the house, penniless.

Soni's jewellery, as was mentioned earlier, were confiscated by her mother-in-law. However, her in-laws and husband maintain that Soni had taken all her clothes and jewellery. According to Soni, she didn't and she says it was not even possible for her to do so. Just before she was turned out of the house she had been to Amritsar, and on the pretext of a worsening situation in Punjab, her father-in-law had asked her to leave behind the gold bangles and chain that she was wearing for reasons of safety. Soni had obeyed. On her return she was asked to leave the house.

The police, Soni and her parents complain, want proof. The onus of proving that they do not have the jewellery is on them and not on her husband and in-laws. The anti-dowry cell, they feel, is taking too much time and is quite powerless. ■

Brides Are Not For Burning by Ranjana Kurnar
Published by Radiant Publishers, New Delhi Price Rs 100

Priority problems

Or why we fared miserably in the Champions Trophy in Berlin

Indian hockey is once again on its familiar rollercoaster ride. Great promise at the start, belied by very poor performance thereafter. And then the ineptitude of the Indian Hockey Federation officials jeopardising India's entry to the World Cup, a premier international competition.

It all began with the preparations for the Champions Trophy held in Berlin. M. P. Ganesh, former Olympian and national coach, insisted on the coaching camps being held in Bangalore. While the facilities there were adequate, there was no scope for advice from outstanding players of the past. According to former international Mohammad Shahid—who retired prematurely alleging discrimination against him—the camps should have been held somewhere in north India, where there was a concentration of former stars. He also said that Ganesh concentrated on the physical fitness of the players without paying much attention to the honing of skills and of combined play. "And the way players are being tossed around, how can you expect a good set of players to gel together as a team?" he asked.

But this reaction came after India finished last in the six-nation Champions Trophy. The saddest part of the story is that India began by defeating three times champions and hosts West Germany. It was a great match for India, especially because, after being a gold down, India slammed in three in a row. They conceded one more before the close, but it still meant that India had started off in great fashion.

However, that result was just a flash in the pan. In their very next outing, India lost 2-3 to Australia. Again, it was a close affair, but there was no denying that Australia was the better side and could have won by a wider margin. In their third match, India lost again, this time to arch-rivals Pakistan by a solitary goal. India were in the game for barely 15 minutes of the first session and then again towards the end of the match. But it was certainly Pakistan's match. Against fancied Holland, India scored first, but thereafter crumbled to a 1-4 defeat. And, in their last encounter, with Great Britain, the tale was complete with a 1-2 loss.

Coach Ganesh began with the excuse that he had several players who were new to top-level international hockey and that they were not too good at defensive play. But this is hardly any excuse, because as a coach he should have realised that there was a need to train the boys in defensive play, especially against European teams. His ineptitude was further revealed by Pakistan and Great Britain. Both these teams had several youngsters in their ranks. And they shaped up to the competition with far greater confidence than their Indian counterparts.

The fact is, India has never been good at forward planning.

Over the last few years, there has been an obsession with fitness—and almost all the pundits said that because our players were not able to keep pace with the Europeans, we were not getting the success we deserved. A lot of time and effort was spent in "getting the players into shape". But there was no visible improvement in our international performances.

There was also a national debate of sorts on the formation of play that India should adopt. The 4-2-4 formation, the sweeper back system all kinds of theories were put forward.



The India-Pakistan match: dismal performance

And the hapless Indian team tried to put these theoretical approaches into practice on the field. Again, there was very little success.

Finally, the IHF thought that a lot of new blood was needed. Accordingly, a whole bunch of youngsters, chosen from the Indian squad which took part in the junior World Cup qualifying tournament, were inducted into the senior side for the Champions Trophy.

Most of these players did not click—Sujit Kumar, Mukesh Kumar, Atif Idris, were examples. And Thoiba Singh on the left flank was an embarrassment most of the time. Then again, our ratio of penalty corner conversions was perhaps the worst in the entire competition.

Several former players have bemoaned the fact that India has very little bench strength. For example, how many left-halves are there in the country today? And the IHF did not follow the simple expedient of choosing players from as wide a field as possible. As Shahid remarked: "The best way would have been to hold the national championship a little before the Champions Trophy."

Former India captain Charanjit Singh went a step ahead. He said India's performance was "disgusting". He advocated a

complete overhauling of the IHF set-up. "Many of those at the helm are people who have never played hockey in their lives. There is need to induct specialists in a big way. At least half the people controlling the game should be experts," he said.

Charanjit's sentiments will be echoed by many hockey lovers. For too long have the public and the players been subjected to the whims and fancies of people who do not have the good of hockey at heart. And this has been aggravated by recent reports of present office-bearers trying to retain their positions of power in the federation.

K.L. Passi, IHF secretary, has issued a circular to the effect that an executive committee meeting would be held to discuss, among other things, the change of venue of the IHF's election meeting scheduled for July. The election meeting was to have been held in Bhopal, but Passi wants it in Bombay. Many executive members feel that this move is motivated by reasons other than the smooth conduct of the meeting.

Then again, Passi is alleged to have written a letter to several members suggesting that R. Prasad, the present president, should be allowed to continue in office. While it is unethical to make an appeal of this kind immediately before the elections, it is all the more surprising that a secretary should start canvassing for his president.

Some executive committee members feel that this is a move to ensure his own seat in the IHF. But the point here is whether or not Prasad can get re-elected. This time, he will need a two-thirds majority to remain in office. According to some insiders, the whole move to have the election meeting shifted to Bombay is to try and ensure that the present incumbents continue in office.

A more serious allegation concerns the priorities of the IHF officials. Even as the Indian squad was going from defeat to defeat, no one seemed to be bothered here in India. The office-bearers were so busy trying to get re-elected that they had made no arrangements for the Indian team's participation in the Intercontinental Cup competition.

The IHF officials knew that the Indian team had to take part in that competition in order to bid for a berth in the World Cup competition to be held in Karachi. But no official bothered to apply for US visas for the squad. The United States, as well as most Western countries, insist on visa applications from intending visitors being made in their country of origin. But, while the Indian squad prepared itself for the Champions Trophy, no one bothered about the US visa application.

A futile attempt was made a day before the team left for Berlin, but the US embassy could not complete the formalities in time. Attempts were made in Berlin and in London to secure these visas, but each time the team members were refused. The only course left open to the team was to return to India and make the application afresh.

But this would mean not only heavy additional expenditure, but the abandoning of what could be a fruitful tour of England. At the time of going to press, there was no indication of the IHF's decision in this regard, but the fact that emerges from this ineptitude is that the officials really do not bother about the fate of Indian hockey. As long as they can hold office, they will have ample time and scope to try and worm their way out of this mess that they themselves have created.

If India does not take part in the Intercontinental Cup, it is certainly reason enough for Messrs Prasad, Passi and company to pack their bags. In any case, it is surprising that Prasad seeks to continue in office despite his elevation to the position of managing director of as busy a concern as Indian Airlines.

Arijit Sen

SUNDAY 2-8 July 1988

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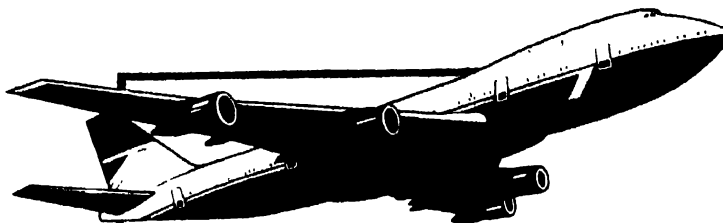


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Unusual diet

One man's meat is another man's poison, say the English. The French put it slightly differently, *Chacun a son gout*, that is, everyone to his taste. And proving the veracity of these two sayings is a 35-year-old Indian, Hari Prajapati of Palanpur town in Gujarat, whose mouth waters at the very mention of the word bricks. Not of the ice-cream variety though, but the stuff of which houses are made.

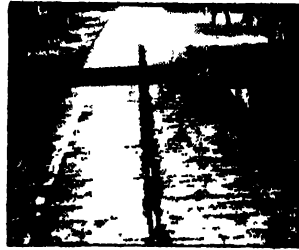


Since his childhood, Hari has been devouring three bricks a day and his worried parents claim that their son has swallowed approximately 30,000 bricks to date. Despite his unusual gastronomic tastes, Hari remains as fit as ever to the utter bewilderment of those in the medical profession.

A 'walk into eternity'

The path last trodden by Indira Gandhi before her assassination on 31 October, 1984—between 1 Safdarjung Road and 1 Akbar Road—has been immortalised in crystal by the internationally-reputed Czech designer, Prof. Jaroslav Fric, of the Art Centrum, Prague.

The 'crystal river' is a gift from the Czech government to the Government of India and in the words of H. Y. Sharada Prasad, secretary of the Indira Gandhi Memorial



Fric's 'crystal river'

Trust, symbolises the late Prime Minister's "walk into eternity". Over ten tonnes of Bohemian crystal were used to make the 33 metre-long 'river' which rests on a frame of high-grade stainless steel. The steel frame was fixed on polished slabs of granite brought from Tamil Nadu. The 'river' stops exactly at the spot where Mrs Gandhi was assassinated. Here a plain glass sheet covers the original concrete slab on which the blood marks are still visible. According to Prof. Fric, it is "a unique monument, the only one of its kind," in the world.

Music auction

One wonders what will be auctioned next. For the last one year it's been art auc-

tions where paintings have been picked up for as much as Rs 10 lakhs (Husain's) for the cause of the nondescript Bombay Art Society. Taking a cue, Music India Ltd got its act together and auctioned the first copy of the compact disc and music cassette of Pankaj Udhas' latest album *Nabeel*. The bids opened at Rs 5,000 but the hammer came down at Rs 1 lakh, the successful bidder was V. Shroff. The money will go to the Cancer Patients Aid Society. Pankaj Udhas who is an exclusive artiste with Music India, has helped the society raise Rs 25 lakhs in the last five years. About half a million compact discs and music cassettes of *Nabeel* have been released worldwide, according to V.J. Lazarus, chairman of Music India.

Songs for integration

Physics, world peace and Tagore. Can the three ever go together? Certainly, if Alok Sanyal, a professor in the department of physics, Jadavpur University,

Calcutta, is to be believed. Sanyal is of the opinion that Indian music, particularly Tagore's songs, would go a long way in bringing enlightenment to the people of the world. "That is why I intend to propagate and popularise basic Indian music, particularly Tagore's songs," says Professor Sanyal. As a first step, he has recently brought out a taped cassette of ten Tagore songs in Hindi. "The Hindi songs would help national integration and enrich our art and culture," he says.

Brave child

She followed in her father's footsteps—literally. Five-year old Sheetal Pandya, weighing barely 11 kgs and a student of upper kg in Baroda, created history when she skated all the way from Delhi to Bombay via Ahmedabad—a distance of



1,600 km. The journey took 51 days. Sheetal accompanied her father, Jagdish Pandya, who is on a skating expedition from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. For the tiny tot, covering about 60 km in eight hours daily must have been no mean exercise, but she certainly won the hearts of the crowds in Bombay when she landed there recently. The feat was meant to create awareness among people towards cancer patients.

THIS INDIA

• **BOMBAY:** The inefficiency of the examination department of the Bombay University was in evidence for the third time in four months at the MA Part 1 examinations held at two centres of the city recently. The post-graduate students, who reached the examination halls, waited for the invigilators to distribute the International Law question papers. Even as several precious minutes ticked away, the question papers were not received and distributed. The anxious students then inquired with the authorities and were stunned to be told that the varsity had "forgotten" to set the question paper on this subject! The students were told to contact the concerned department after the rest of the examinations were completed and fresh dates would be announced for the International Law paper—*Indian Express* (A.K. Guha, Nasik)

• **BANGALORE:** Disgusted with the erratic working of their telephones and to voice their protest against the "irresponsible" attitude of the telephone authorities, nearly 100 subscribers at Mudegali town in Belgaum district recently disconnected their "dead telephones" and took them in a procession on a donkey's back to express their displeasure. After the procession, stated to be the first of its kind in the state, the subscribers handed over the "dead" instruments to the local telephone exchange—*Deccan Herald* (D. Gundu Rao, Bangalore)

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BEGINNING 2 JULY 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

A favourable week for romance. But do not be in a hurry to get married. Rely on your friends and relatives for advice. This is not a good week for making changes on the professional front. The domestic front may give rise to a few problems, but don't worry, they will be sorted out soon. A word of warning, friends are out to deceive you. So be on your guard.

Good dates: 2, 4 and 8

Lucky numbers: 2, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: North



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

This is not a favourable week for you. Problems could crop up on the professional front. Your efforts may not meet with success. The domestic front will not be free from problems either. An elderly member of your family will cause you a lot of worry. Your spouse will not be particularly understanding this week. Financially, prospects are not bright. A good week for romance.

Good dates: 3, 6 and 7

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9

Favourable direction: South



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

This, unfortunately, is not a very bright week for you. Your efforts are not going to meet with any kind of success. This is not a good period for lovers, your partner will be demanding which may cause you a fair amount of worry. Financially, however, the prospects are bright. You will make a lot of money by way of recovery of loans. The advice of a friend is going to prove very helpful this week.

Good dates: 3, 5 and 7

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6

Favourable direction: North and South



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

Success lies in store for you this week. Social activities, speculative investments and general business affairs are well signified. A letter from an old friend will bring you good news. This is a very good week for romance too. Those of you who are already married may meet someone who will give you a lot of happiness. This, however, may create problems at home.

Good dates: 3, 4 and 6

Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 7

Favourable direction: East



LEO (21 July—20 August)

This is a week of changes. A sudden turn of events is likely to relieve you of a great deal of anxiety. A word of warning, be on your guard, for a friend is out to deceive you. Businessmen, however, are likely to make steady progress this week. But, do not take risks unnecessarily. On the domestic front, friends and relatives will contribute to your happiness. An old friend will contact you.

Good dates: 4, 5 and 8

Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 8

Favourable direction: West



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

A favourable week lies ahead of you. Financially, this is a rewarding phase. You will be able to repay your debts provided you do not squander your resources. On the professional front you will face competition, do not lose confidence since luck is on your side. This is also a good period for romance, courtship and marriage. Friends and acquaintances will keep you busy.

Good dates: 2, 7 and 8

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: North



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

Financially, this is a bright week for you. You will be able to repay your debts. However, do not be extravagant. On the professional front, there may be a few setbacks, your current assignment may fall through and a new undertaking is not likely to yield results. But do not be disheartened. You will see through the crisis with the help of your colleagues.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 8

Lucky numbers: 2, 7 and 8

Favourable direction: East



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

A week of mixed fortunes lies ahead of you. On the professional front, you are likely to encounter obstacles. If you are in business, be prepared to face setbacks. However, do not get unduly depressed. Your problems will be over soon. Do not ignore your friends or elderly members of your family. Those who are young are advised to push through their ventures.

Good dates: 4, 6 and 7

Lucky numbers: 3, 4 and 9

Favourable direction: South



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

Keep a close watch on your health, for, this is a week packed with activities. A good phase for making amends for past errors. Financially, the last two days of the week look rather bright. A word of caution: check extravagance. Romance is well signified. Seek the help of friends and relatives when necessary. Conserve your energy. The domestic front will remain calm.

Good dates: 3, 4 and 8

Lucky numbers: 5, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: North-east



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

This is a good week for love and courtship. Problems will be sorted out and you may even get married. You are likely to make new friends and fresh interests will keep you busy for the most part of this week. Children will be a source of joy. For bachelors, the domestic front will remain calm. However, a word of caution, be on your guard, for your enemies will be active.

Good dates: 5, 6 and 7

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 8

Favourable direction: North-west



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

The stars are favourable for those in love. Your partner will turn out to be extremely helpful. Do not hesitate to propose marriage. For those in business, too, this is a lucky week. Go ahead with your expansion plans but do not invest in speculative ventures. Your health may cause some problems. You may be down with cold and fever. Do not rely too much on your friends and relatives.

Good dates: 2, 3 and 4

Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: South-west



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

On the professional front, a fair measure of success lies in store for you this week. Your efforts are likely to be crowned with success and you might even get a promotion. Those in business are advised to go ahead with new deals and contracts. The domestic front, unfortunately, does not look too bright. There are chances of a serious misunderstanding with your spouse.

Good dates: 6, 7 and 8

Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 8

Favourable direction: South-east

Star Partners: Virgo—Taurus

The Virgo woman and the Taurus man make an ideal match. Both are capable of understanding each other's problems. What is more important is that the woman is ready to adjust and make compromises. Her partner too is accommodating. Both of them are capable of leading an active social life.



Patronage politics

You've got to grant this to Jagannath Mishra—he doesn't buckle under pressure, even if it is being exerted by the Congress(I) high command.

It is no secret that the party bosses in Delhi find Mishra's Jan Vikas Manch thoroughly objectionable. But the wily Bihar politician refuses to wind up his wayside show. Though he stepped down from the presidency of the organisation after taking over as the Bihar PCC(I) chief, Mishra continues to extend patronage to



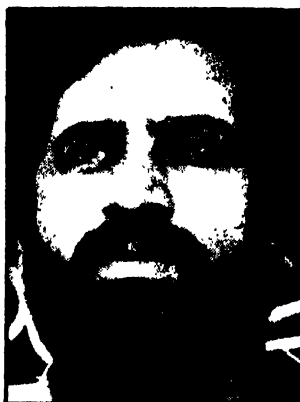
Mishra: refusing to be pressured

the Manch, which he claims has a membership of 60,000.

As things stand now, aspirants for posts in the Bihar party unit are more likely to succeed if they go through the Jan Vikas Manch channel. And this is causing the high command no small worry, especially since one of the senior office-bearers of the Manch recently joined the Janata Dal.

Sporting venture

Ever since Suresh Kalmadi helped found the controversial aqua sports centre at the Panshet dam site, other politicians with money to invest have been dying to get in on the act. Prominent



Suresh Kalmadi: establishing a precedent

among them, Union minister of state for expenditure B. K. Gadhi.

In fact, Gadhi's recent visits to Bombay are said to be connected to this desire of his. Apparently, he intends setting up an aqua sports centre in collaboration with Acme Builders. The place they have decided upon is the land that lies between Bhiwandi and Kalyan (the villages of Pimlaghar and Pimplas). The Ulhas river forms the waterway here, and the scheme is to put up sporting facilities at this site.

Gadhi has also recruited an ex-BMRDA official who will help him by providing maps, charts and other information, when the minister has to put up his proposal before the relevant authorities.

The Governor's rule

Whose side is Karnataka Governor P. Venkatasubbaiah on, anyway? While some insist that he is a Congress(I) man (witness his lifting the ban on the CBI's functioning within the state), others maintain that he is doing everything possible to improve the Janata Dal's poll prospects.

The latter theory gains credence if one examines recent events. In the two months since the dismissal of the Bommai government,

Venkatasubbaiah has hiked the fees in professional colleges increased bus fares, failed to do anything about the scandals involving the land and housing cooperative societies, or the liquor lobby.

None of these decisions is likely to go down well with the public, and considering the Governor's close identification with the Congress(I), the latter is bound to fall in public estimation. And anything that works to the ruling party's disadvantage cannot but benefit the Opposition, goes the argument. In fact, a close aide of Ramakrishna Hegde has already begun boasting to friends: "Don't worry, the Governor is on our side."

The only saving grace for the Congress(I) is that, of late, Venkatasubbaiah has indulged in occasional bouts of shadow boxing with the party, and this may salvage its cause somewhat

Change of guard

It seems that the AIADMK has had its fill of Jayalalitha's *nakhras*. It's nearly two months since the lady



Veerappan: president designate?

made a public appearance, and worse, she's even 'unavailable' when party members need to discuss issues of great import with her.

The latest is that the AIADMK has decided upon an alternative. And the consensus choice appears to be R.M. Veerappan, the wily Chettiar, who began his



P. Venkatasubbaiah: indeterminate loyalties

career as MGR's studio manager and private accountant, and was a power to reckon with during Ramachandran's chief ministership.

Now the talk is that Jayalalitha will be asked to step down as party leader and Veerappan will take over. Apparently, severe arthritis of the knee has reduced Jayalalitha's mobility, and there are apprehensions that she will not be able to take the pressures of active campaigning. Also, the beautiful AIADMK leader is reportedly afraid that, in keeping with the current violent trend in Tamil Nadu politics, somebody may well throw acid on her and disfigure the face



Jayalalitha: fired?

that launched a thousand blockbusters.

So, a compromise has reportedly been arrived at. Jayalalitha will be given a financial consideration to ensure that she leads a comfortable life in retirement, and arch-enemy Veerappan will take over as AIADMK supremo.

Sangh mathematics

Atal Behari Vajpayee, he of the *brahmachari* existence, has always seemed the advocate of celibacy. But his latest preoccupation is



A.B. Vajpayee: controlling the population

family planning. Of late, the BJP leader has been spending his free time (and he sure has plenty of that these days) writing letters to members of Parliament and other political leaders, pleading that they evolve a national consensus on the subject.

And as is usual with all former Jan Sanghis, Vajpayee has some very novel views on the matter. According to him, it is not the desire to have a son or to increase the number of earning members in the family that leads people to have more children. It is just the competition between Hindus and Muslims, both of whom wish to outnumber each other, that has led to the population explosion.

But how can 20 per cent of the population possibly outnumber 80 per cent? Vajpayee doesn't say. And we can only guess.

Dal vs Dal

The Congress(I) has a new bunch of storm-troopers: the Seva Dal, which is increasingly taking on the Youth Congress' role

of roughing up political opponents and such other trouble-shooting.

Recently, their success was certified by none other than Haryana chief minister Devi Lal. It happened like this. Lal was present at a Janata Dal meeting at Bhop-

endorsement than this. Little wonder then, that Rajiv Gandhi has begun paying the Seva Dal far more attention than he does the Youth Congress. And that the implementation of all new programmes, including those that involve Opposition-baiting, are being assigned to it, in preference over any other party organ.

On Buta's travels

If the importance of a politician is gauged by the size of the entourage he carts around, then Buta Singh is second only to the Prime Minister. Not only is the home minister shadowed by an army of Black Cat commandos, his family accompanies him on nearly all his visits. And those inconvenienced most by this predilection of Buta's are his securitymen, hard put to look after the home minister and his numerous hangers-on at the same time.

Take the time Buta Singh went to Srinagar, for instance. The occasion: the conference of Congress(I) CMs. The trip was official in nature, but undeterred by such niceties, the entire Singh clan tagged along. Not content with kicking up a holy row at the Srinagar hotel where they were putting up, the VIPs decided to go sight-seeing in Gulmarg. Result: the Black Cats spent most of their time tagging the minis-



Singh: carting his family around

ter's family around on their travels, than carrying out their primary responsibility: providing security for Buta.

Goofed

External affairs ministry sources have it that foreign secretary S.K. Singh is on his way out. Reason: his abysmal performance at the bilateral meeting on Siachen recently held in Pakistan.

Singh accompanied defence secretary Naresh Chandra for the talks and all appeared to be going well. The negotiations were conducted in a cordial atmosphere.

But then came a joint press conference to spoil matters. Addressed by Humayun Khan, the Pakistan foreign secretary and his Indian counterpart, the event proved disastrous for the latter. Khan informed the assembled press corps that the two sides had decided to go back to the positions they occupied in 1972. No such understanding had been arrived at, and this was Singh's cue to issue a contradiction. Instead, he endorsed the statement.

Predictably, all hell broke loose at the Prime Minister's office. The very next day Rajiv called an urgent meeting to discuss the situation arising out of Singh's *faux pas*, and it was decided to issue an official clarification. And to take Singh down a peg or two.

al, where (as is usual in such affairs) the supporters of V.C. Shukla and Raghu Thakur got into an argument, which soon developed into a serious fight. Things deteriorated so that one Janata Dal leader even slapped V.C. Shukla, much to the *desi* Goebbels' (remember the Emergency?) disbelief.

Devi Lal, afraid no doubt that he'd be made to suffer the same indignity, ran for cover, towards the nearby guest house. Screaming all the while: "*Congress Seva Dal ke log yahan ghus aye hain* (The Congress Seva Dal members have infiltrated here)."

There could be no greater

Devi Lal: certificate of merit



V.C. Shukla: roughed up



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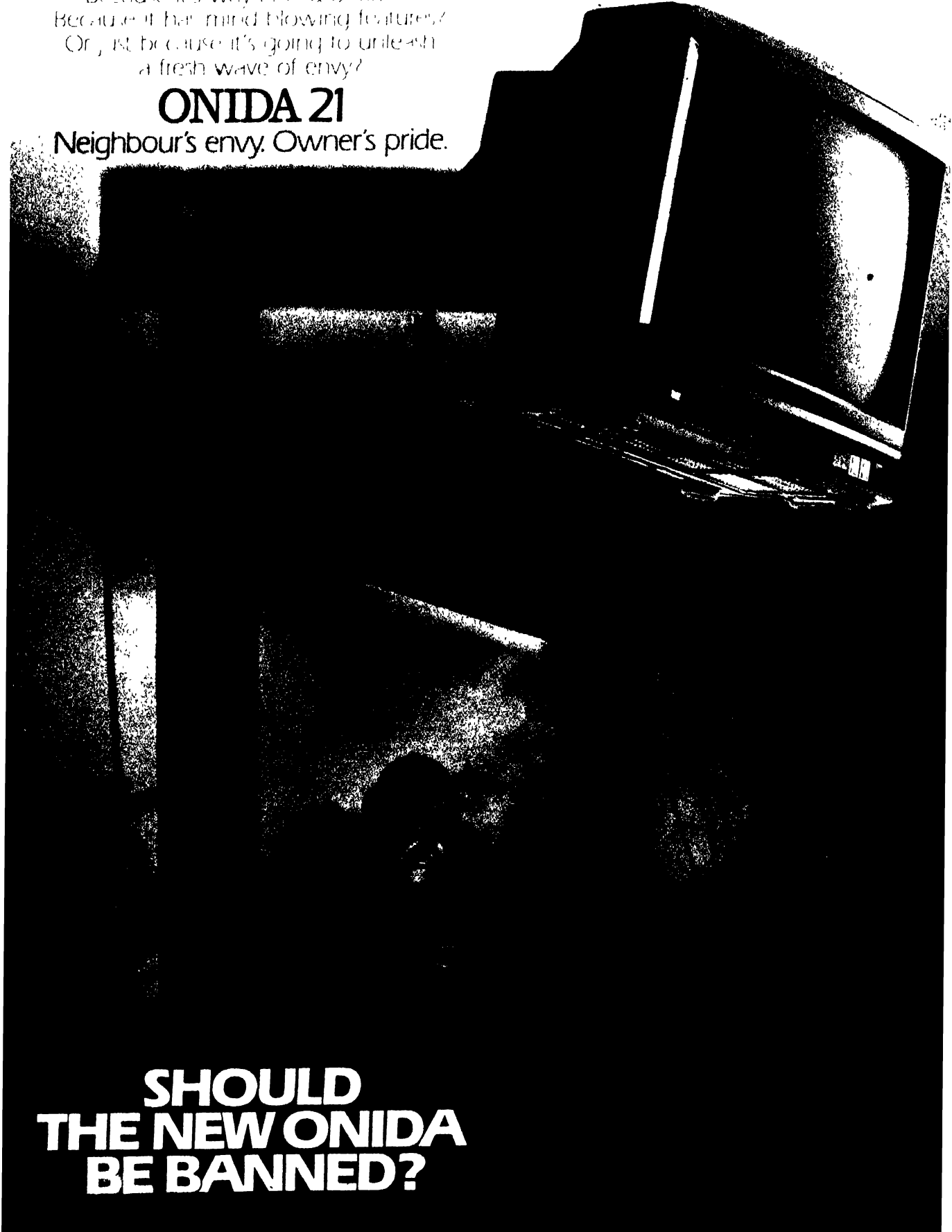
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THE MYSTERY OF ARUN NEHRU'S FOREIGN TRIP

SUNDAY

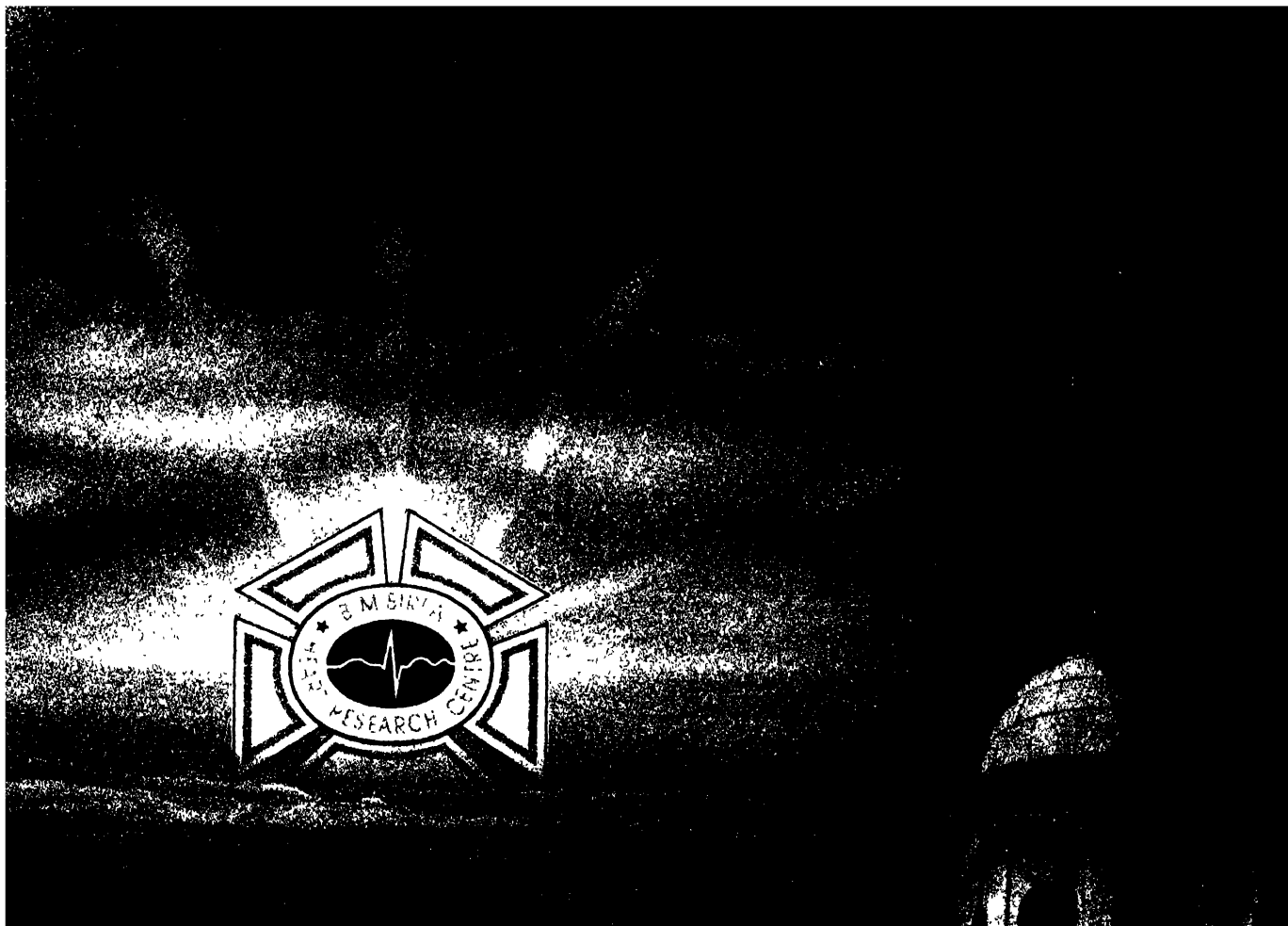


CONFRONTATION

A cold war breaks out between India and
Sri Lanka. The full story

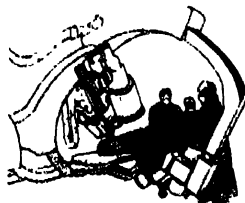
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The Siachen fiasco and the battering of Nepal



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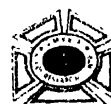
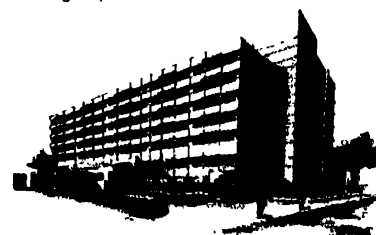
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Barbaric regime

The ruthless massacre of thousands of unarmed students at Tiananmen Square defies human comprehension (*Democracy demanded*, 18—24 June). While the incident has shocked the entire world, it has also exposed the fascist thinking of the gerontocracy in communist China. Such a barbaric repression of peacefully demonstrating students and civilians is a violation of all norms of civilised values. How ironical that the Square at Tiananmen which in Chinese means 'heavenly peace', was converted into a square of bloodshed. The Chinese leadership ought to realise that they cannot hope to suppress a democratic rebellion through the 'barrel of a gun'. The day is not far when, like in Russia, *glasnost* will arrive in China too, and the sacrifice of the Chinese students and civilians will not have gone in vain.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

■ By gunning down the students, the Chinese govern-

ment has shown itself to be autocratic. And the manner in which unarmed demonstrators at Tiananmen Square were brutally killed by soldiers in tanks is only an indication of the fact that the Chinese government actually depends on guns to settle a revolutionary movement. Far from the tall talk of resolving disputes by peaceful means!

The students in China raised their voice for a rightful cause. They demanded democracy, freedom of speech and a corruption-free country. But the present government in China is ruled by a handful of dictators who have extended their stay in power by crushing the students movement which threatened its existence. The Chinese government has, no doubt, suppressed the student movement for the present, but a mass movement of this kind is bound to surface again. And the fire of revolution which is now smouldering in the hearts of the students will become an inferno, and this will ultimately bring about an end to the dictatorship.

Partha Dutta, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Death on the road

The feature on road accidents was an eye-opener (*The way to dusty death*, 18—24 June). The traffic crisis has worsened over the last decade with the accident rate registering a 100 per cent increase. Consequently, the fatality rate has also risen steeply. Alcoholism, appalling road conditions, poor road sense and traffic viola-



An accident and one more death: high rate of fatality

tions are the main reasons for the increasing number of road accidents. The only way to improve the deteriorating situation is to enforce stringent traffic rules. Any person violating these rules must be severely penalised.

Shyamal Gupta, Burdwan (West Bengal)

■ During the past decade, the number of cars and two-wheelers in India has risen at an alarming rate, causing acute congestion on the roads. This fact, coupled with reckless driving and traffic rule violations, has been largely responsible for the increase in road accidents. A drive to educate the public on road use and proper training of drivers are essential to bring order on Indian roads and reduce the number of fatal road accidents.

S. Ramesh, Bangalore (Karnataka)

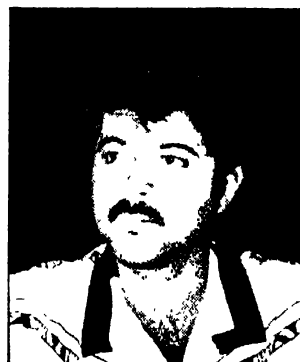
A closed mind

Kuldip Nayar's column has misrepresented the Nepalese monarchy and the Rashtriya Panchayat of Nepal (*On the line*, 11—17 June). Monarchy in Nepal stands for the unity and integrity of the country. It has always identified its interests with the interests of the people of Nepal. The Rashtriya Panchayat, on the other hand, is the supreme legislative body of Nepal which has the right to discuss matters of national interest within the scope of the Constitution as well as to legislate when necessary.

Civil rights are granted in full and guaranteed by the Constitution as well as the judiciary. It is therefore grossly incorrect to talk about a denial of 'basic rights' to the Nepalese people. The columnist should have had an open mind and appreciated the truly democratic character of the partyless Panchayat polity before making unwarranted comments on the political system of Nepal.

Ram Bahadur K.C., Royal Nepalese Consulate General, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Mass appeal



Anil Kapoor: versatile

Anil Kapoor is one of the finest actors of the Hindi film industry (*Return of the tramp*, 18—24 June). The likes of Govinda, Sunjay Dutt, Sunny Deol and Mithun Chakraborty are no match to his versatility. Time and again, this brilliant actor has proved his mettle in films like *Mashaal*, *Mr India*, *Ram Laxman*, and *Eeshwar*. Anil's success lies in the fact that the common man can easily



A wounded Chinese student: brutal repression

identify with the characters portrayed by him. For instance, *Tezaab's* Munna and *Ram Lakhan's* Lakhan were down-to-earth characters. Another point in Anil's favour is that he does not seem to have any starry tantrums. With his good looks and talent, this actor will no doubt rule the tinsel world in the days to come.

Anil Mathur, Sindri (Bihar)

Breakthrough

The successful launching of Agni, the indigeneously-built surface-to-surface missile, signifies a major breakthrough in India's missile development programme (*Fire in the sky*, 4—10 June). What makes India's achievement more laudable is the fact that it is the only Third World country to have its own missile technology. The test firing has ensured that India does not ever have to succumb to threats to its security. The launch of Agni is a milestone in India's quest for self-reliance in areas of high technology. My congratulations to the scientists, engineers and technicians who have made this possible.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

The patient suffers

It is not the doctor, but the poor man who is in distress, thanks to the strike called by the doctors in Delhi (*Doctors in distress*, 28 May—3 June). There is no reason why the government should accede to the demands of the junior doctors, especially when they have maintained that they are only students. It is absurd on their part to seek parity with government employees. In fact, their action goes against professional ethics. In the long run, it is the common man who can ill afford to visit private nursing homes, who is affected.

P.N. Banerji, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

A different Mahatma

It was an interesting feature (*For Godse's sake*, 4—10 June). Without entering into the controversy of the correctness of the scrutiny, it is first necessary to assess Gandhiji's character and rule in the national movement. Gandhiji was a politician in the true sense. By clever manipulation, he had sidelined patriots like Subhash Chandra Bose and surrounded himself with sycophants. The prefix

Mahatma was hardly applicable to him because his behaviour on many occasions proved to be otherwise. He erred in the belief that since he was a Hindu, he had nothing to fear from that community. His fasts unto death were a sham. It is significant to note that he did not resort to a fast to prevent the partition of India.

K.B. Padia, Ahmedabad (Gujarat)

Only charges

Udayan Sharma seems to have done a great job in bombarding Arun Nehru with questions regarding his fore-



Arun Nehru: a lavish holiday

ign trip (*A mysterious trip*, 18—24 June). A public figure is accountable to the people and Arun Nehru must answer the questions that

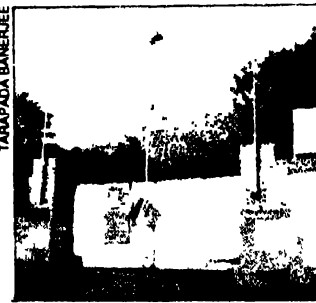
have been raised. However, the amount—Rs 22 lakhs—that the Nehrus have reportedly spent on their foreign jaunt sounds a bit far-fetched. The columnist would do well to explain how he arrived at this astronomical figure. If Arun Nehru is bound to answer Udayan Sharma's questions, the latter too would do well to dispel our doubts.

V.K. Gupta, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

Divided unions

There are many reasons for the failure of unionism in India (*Employer militancy*, 18—24 June). Politicians are mainly responsible for the present state of affairs. First, politicians have always used the trade union

movement to achieve their own ends. They have even encouraged factionalism in trade unions. The working class unwittingly fell into the hands of the so-called trade union leaders. The innumerable strikes have ultimately strengthened the hands of the employer who is today in



The Dunlop factory at Sahagunj

a position to call the shots. The failure of trade unionism was necessary for employees to wake up to the fact that jobs are not easy to come by, particularly at a time when poverty and unemployment continue to haunt the country.

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

Why only Hashmi?

1 2 April will always be remembered as Safdar Hashmi Day (*In remembrance*, 30 April—6 May). But as a journalist, Rajesh Joshi of *Jansatta*, rightly pointed out, one should not forget the Nepali labourer, Ram Bahadur, who was also killed along with Hashmi. For his observations, however, Joshi was humiliated and manhandled by M.K. Raina.

J.P. Shaw, Calcutta (West Bengal)

A slip

Your cover story (1979: *Dreams die fast*, 2—8 July), states that Jagjivan Ram died on 6 July, 1989. You are either three years too late or one week too early!

Anand Desai, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Our apologies for the typographical error—Editor

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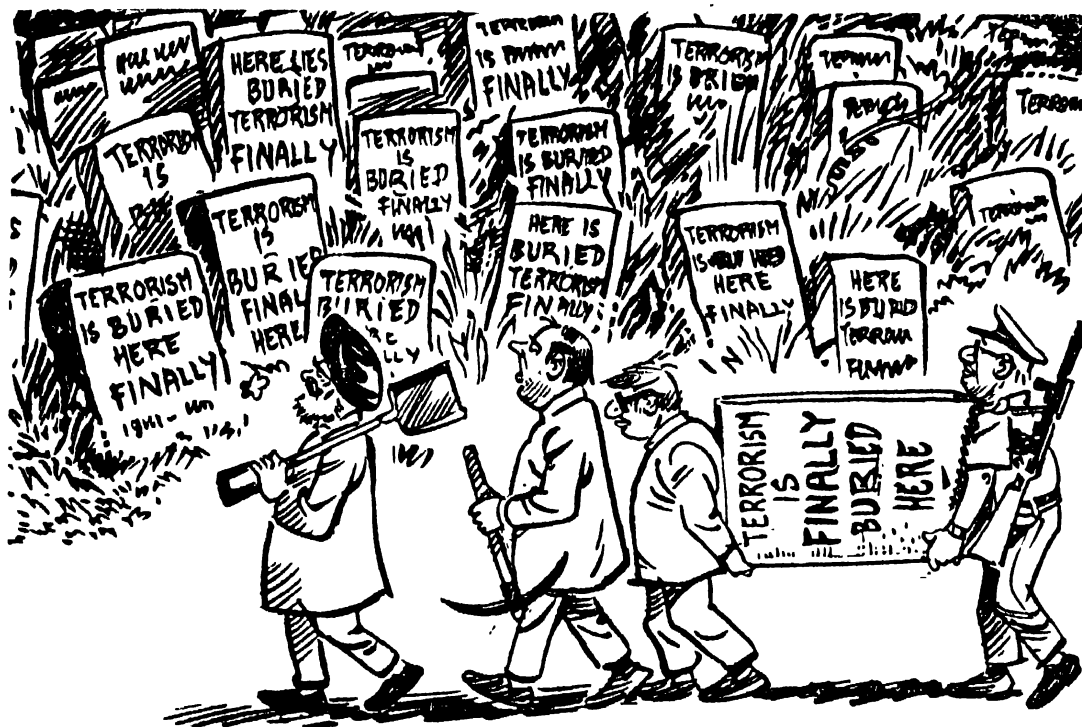
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R.K. LAXMAN THE TIMES OF INDIA

We are the guarantors under the agreement and we will fulfil the obligations.

RAJIV GANDHI, Prime Minister, on India's commitment to protect Tamil interests in Sri Lanka

After the end of July, they (the IPKF) have no business whatsoever in even an inch of land of my country.

RANASINGHE PREMADASA, Sri Lankan President

We believe in the Constitution, but the Constitution does not believe in us.

SIMRANJEET SINGH MANN, detained president of the Unified Akali Dal

We know the National Front comprises political parties of the rich people...

SAROJ MUKHERJEE, West Bengal CPI(M) secretary and Left Front chairman

This is one more quibbling of a juvenile who has emerged as the archetypal figure of flippancy, dissimulation and bumbling naivete.

K.K. TEWARI, Union minister of state for information and broadcasting, on V.P. Singh's description of Doordarshan as 'Dushtdarshan'

Only the *Indian Express* can think of that. The Janata Dal will, of course, break up but before that the *Indian Express* will also break up.

SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY, Janata Party MP, replying to an *Express* correspondent on whether he planned to finish off the Janata Dal by helping the Congress(I)

The crowds shown in all the Prime Minister's public meetings are shots of Kumbh Mela with the Prime Minister's image superimposed.

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE, Janata Dal vice-president

It is like the ant wanting to kiss a camel.

SHARAD PAWAR, chief minister of Maharashtra, on the Opposition's ambitions

I do not want to be a national leader. There are too many of them.

BAL THACKERAY, Shiv Sena president

She was not just first among equals, but stood far above the rest.

JYOTI BASU, chief minister of West Bengal, on Indira Gandhi

We have a 'Doonocracy' in the country instead of democracy.

V.K. KRISHNA IYER, former Supreme Court judge

I can't have a baby without marriage. I'm not Neena Gupta.

FARHA, film star

An area of discord

India's confrontation with Sri Lanka leads to the cancellation of the SAARC foreign ministers' meeting and throws South Asia into disarray

South Asian politics is the art of the impossible. At least as far as India is concerned. And the result: mid-1989 finds India's regional diplomacy touching new lows with the only major SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) country not openly hostile to Big Brother being Pakistan. Who would have thought that Pakistan, traditionally always at loggerheads with India, would be its closest ally in South Asia? And even a year back, how many could predict that India's most bitter critics in the region would be its long-standing friends—Sri Lanka and Nepal?

Last December, when leaders of the seven member countries of SAARC posed for the world media at Daaman-e-koh, a picturesque retreat in the Marghala Hills near Islamabad during the fourth summit, it seemed as if this regional grouping—derided by cynics as a mere "talk-shop"—was finally fulfilling its laudable objectives. After all, it had brought Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto, heads of two countries considered sworn enemies in the region, to the negotiating table. It was the first time in almost three decades that an Indian Prime Minister had visited Pakistan—never before had leaders of these two countries established such a good rapport in so short a time. As the beaming faces of 44-year-old Rajiv and 35-year-old Benazir stared out from TV screens and newspapers wrote about the almost conspiratorial smiles the two exchanged at the joint press briefing on the final day of the summit, it looked like the beginning of a new, and dramatic, chapter in South Asia.

But recent events gave a handle to SAARC's critics to scream that the organisation was just a "mirage". Hopes of South Asian unity were shattered as Sri Lanka announced that it would not attend the foreign ministers' conference scheduled to begin on 1 July at Islamabad in protest against "India's intransigence". In a six-page letter to his Pakistani counterpart Sahebzada Yaqub Khan (copies of which were distributed to all other foreign ministers assembled at Islamabad), Ranjan Wijeratne, the Sri Lankan foreign minister, said that his

country's decision to stay away was a protest gesture to highlight its differences with India on the question of withdrawal of the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) from Sri Lankan soil.

Sri Lanka's adamant stand led to the cancellation of the first day's session of the SAARC senior officials' meeting, creating a record of sorts. It was the

standing committee of foreign secretaries and council of ministers, comprising the foreign ministers of the seven nations.

Telephone trunk lines among the SAARC capitals buzzed incessantly as frantic efforts were made to persuade Colombo to revise its decision. Pakistan, the current head of SAARC, apparently



SAARC summit: basically, it is India's party

first time since SAARC's birth in December 1985 at Dhaka that the committee of senior officials had been unable to hold its sittings prior to those of the

The boycott of the SAARC meet was the most dramatic of the gestures through which Sri Lanka has sought to internationalise its differences with India over the continued presence of the IPKF on the island

suggested that India issue a statement placating Sri Lanka, but India was determined not to bow to pressure. A foreign office spokesman told pressmen in New Delhi on 26 June, "We refuse to accept such blatant violations of the SAARC charter, especially Article 11, which clearly states that bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from SAARC deliberations. We appreciate the concern of Sri Lanka, but this should not have stood in the way of its participation in the Islamabad meeting."

As the SAARC charter stipulates that all decisions have to be taken unanimously, Pakistan announced the postponement of the ministerial meet. The ensuing crisis, though the gravest, is, however, by no means the only one in its four-year-old history. The road to regional cooperation in South Asia has always been riddled with pitfalls. De-

spite stipulations in the association's charter that bilateral issues would not come under its purview, the latter have often come in the way of the organisation's smooth functioning. As a senior diplomat of a SAARC country posted in New Delhi told SUNDAY, "Unlike other regional groupings, like the ASEAN or the EEC, the SAARC does not have a common threat perception. Again, unlike the first two, there are vast discrepancies within its member states. India is a giant with pygmies all around. And India is also the only country in the association which has common borders with the other countries...In SAARC, instead of a common threat perception, there is suspicion of mutual threat..."

The recent boycott was the most dramatic of the gestures through which Sri Lanka has sought to internationalise its differences with India. In May 1985, at the Thimpu meeting of foreign ministers, Sri Lanka had alleged that Tamil militants were operating from bases in India and threatened to stay away from the conference. At the eleventh hour, it was persuaded by the host, King Jigme Wanchuk, to attend.

Then again in June 1987, when the SAARC foreign ministers were to meet in Delhi, Sri Lanka objected to India unilaterally sending food supplies to Jaffna. Rajiv personally spoke to the then president, Junius Jayewardene, to ensure his country's presence at the coun-

cil of ministers in the Indian capital.

The immediate fall-out of the postponement of the foreign ministers' meet is the prospect of a headless SAARC secretariat. The term of the present secretary-general, Abul Hasan of Bangladesh, expires in mid-July. His successor has to be chosen by then. At one stage, Sri Lanka had been reportedly asked whether it would endorse decisions taken at Islamabad even if it stuck to its stand of staying away from the ministerial meeting. However, according to diplomatic sources in New Delhi, it did not agree to this. Last week, as the impasse at Islamabad continued, the Sri Lankan high commissioner in Delhi, Dr Stanley Kalpage, a former chemistry

Unlikely friends, likely conflicts

Who's afraid of a Siachen agreement?

The Lankans want out of the accord they signed with such fanfare only two years ago. The Nepalese believe that Big Brother wants to starve them. And the Bangladeshis remain intensely suspicious of their one-time 'liberator'. That leaves India and Pakistan as the unlikely friends in the subcontinent, and both Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto spare no effort to broadcast their new-found harmony.

The problem with unlikely friendships, alas, is that they ignore all too likely areas of conflict. So it has been with India and Pakistan. Both countries have armies eyeballing each other on either side of the border at sub-zero temperatures in the Siachen glacier. As the glacier is of no use to anyone ("There is not a blade of grass there," the late Gen. Zia-ul Haq said in 1985), the whole thing is no more than a prestige issue. And prestige issues can never be easily resolved.

Last month, attempts to talk away the differences led to a fiasco, with a diplomatic rebuke for Pakistan foreign secretary Humayun Khan and egg all over the face of his Indian counterpart, S.K. Singh.

After talks between the foreign secretaries and defence secretaries of the two countries were over, Khan and Singh decided to address the media. Both agreed that the talks had gone well and Khan added that

the two countries would withdraw their armies to the 1972 positions. S.K. Singh seemed happy with this statement and the next day, this 'agreement' made the headlines. Score one for good neighbourliness.

Not quite. The very next day, the external affairs ministry put its official spokesman up to denying that

The problem with unlikely friendships is that they ignore likely areas of conflict. So it is with Pakistan and India, whose armies eyeball each other on either side of the border at Siachen glacier

any agreement had been reached. But surely, Singh had gone along with Khan's claim? No, said the spokesman, he had simply not contradicted it.

Bizarre enough. But there was more. The statement issued after the defence secretaries' meeting suggested that there had been a

breakthrough: "There was agreement...based on deployment of forces...so as to conform with the Shimla Agreement." This suggested that India had accepted Benazir's claim that the relations between the two countries should be governed by the 1972 Shimla Agreement and strengthened Khan's contention.

So what had happened? The answer seems to be that India and Pakistan had agreed to pull back from Siachen and from the pointless conflict (initiated by India in 1984). But no dates were set and India wanted it done quietly. Khan, however, thought that this was a good way to get some domestic acclaim for Be-

On the Siachen border: a prestige issue for bot



professor, was asked at a public function whether Sri Lanka would continue to boycott all future meetings of the SAARC. Kalpage replied, "I cannot answer your question. Only President Premadasa can do that."

Since no decisions involving the association can be taken unless all seven member nations agree, it is not clear how the next secretary-general will be selected. A lot, of course, will depend on Abul Hasan's scheduled visit to Colombo in the first week of July and whether he will be able to impress upon the Sri Lankan government the urgency of holding the postponed ministerial meeting soon so that SAARC's functioning is not disrupted. For instance, the budget for

nazir and announced that even on Siachen India had accepted the Shimla formula suggested by her.

The problem is that India went past the 1972 boundaries in 1984 (arguing that she had a legal claim) and so Khan's assertion sounded suspiciously like saying that the Indians had agreed to retreat. Obviously S.K. Singh's political masters could not accept that and hence, the retractions and recriminations.

However, neither side has cancelled the next defence secretaries' meeting. So perhaps the Siachen conflict will be de-escalated, eventually. Only, both countries will be more discreet this time.



Rajiv Gandhi with Benazir Bhutto: unlikely friends

the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre in Bangladesh has to be approved so that the programmes do not grind to a halt.

But the most important aspect of Sri Lanka's recent boycott is the questions it has thrown up about the norms governing the behaviour of member countries of SAARC. "The question is whether there should be a common norm of behaviour in the South Asian region. Or should there be one convention for a big country and another for smaller countries. India was invited by Sri Lanka. Now the host is asking the guest to leave, but the guest is refusing. The question is: should India justify its actions by setting its own rules that contradict universally-accepted norms of inter-state relations?" wonders a New Delhi-based diplomat of a SAARC country.

The Sri Lankan high commissioner, Dr Kalpage, asserted at a recent meeting of the Indo-Sri Lankan Cultural Council, "There is no attempt to wreck SAARC. There was no attempt to embarrass India. We were simply not in a mood to attend the meeting (at Islamabad)." He also noted, "If we had intentions of raising the issue of IPKF withdrawal at the SAARC meeting, we would have obviously attended it. The decision to stay away was a gesture of protest. My foreign minister wrote to his Pakistani counterpart not to say that Sri Lanka wants to disrupt the meeting. The letter merely said that we have a problem with India; we understand that SAARC meetings are not meant for raising bilateral issues, but because of present circumstances, because of what he termed 'India's intransigence', we would like to make a symbolic protest... We know we are not in a position to sort out our problem with India by force.

President Premadasa believes in non-violence. And the protest gesture was to express our people's anguish and anger, like Mahatma Gandhi's *satyagraha*."

Was Sri Lanka's protest gesture warranted? New Delhi's position is as uncompromising as Sri Lanka's. "SAARC has to take a firm decision on whether it will allow any one country to act in a petulant manner and bring the whole organisation into disrepute," say South Block officials firmly. India asserts that it "will not be browbeaten", though it will not do anything to "break SAARC". New Delhi has also made it clear to Pakistan that as the current head of SAARC, it is that country's responsibility to diffuse the current tension. "SAARC is Pakistan's baby right now. Surely, it does not want the baby to die in her own lap," said an Indian official. Another pointed out that "even on previous occasions, Sri Lanka had threatened to boycott SAARC meetings, but had been eventually persuaded to attend. If Sri Lanka persists with its current stand, it would only mean that Pakistan does not have enough clout."

The current imbroglio has also given SAARC critics the chance to once again claim that the organisation is nothing but a forum which offered "opportunities to other countries to gang up against India".

Originally, it was Bangladesh's idea to set up an organisation to promote South Asian regional cooperation. Bangladesh had been having problems with India over water-sharing and Farakka. And it thought that a forum like SAARC would help its cause as it could be used to exert moral pressure on India. Indira Gandhi was not keen on the idea, but eventually agreed, after a great deal of persuasion by the late Bangladesh President Zia-ur Rehman.

Big Brother gets angry

The humiliation of Nepal is almost complete

India seems to be the only one to have gained from the massacre at Tiananmen Square and the resulting chaos in China. With Asia's biggest power at war with itself, super India has found its position considerably strengthened. Nowhere is this more apparent than in its dealings with the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal.

While both sides offer long and tedious justifications, the dispute is really over Nepal's attempts to free itself of its dependence on India. The Nepalese had begun courting the Chinese, had tried to reduce imports from India and had made other assertions of independence.

Such moves did not go down well with Big Brother. India retaliated by telling land-locked Nepal that it could only have transit rights if it agreed to club these with trade. 'When the Nepalese seemed hesitant, imports of fuel and other vital supplies from India dried up and all transit points, except for two, were boarded up.

Nepal called the Indian move a blockade and warned, through gritted teeth, that it would suffer temporary hardship but when the blockade was over, would end up in the Chinese sphere of influence.

India laughed away the threat and now, South Block is in hysterics. With China in upheaval, the Nepalese find that their problems are of no consequence to Beijing and have returned, cap in hand, to New Delhi.

The mandarins at South Block have been cool. They took a month and a half to reply to a letter from the Nepalese foreign ministry requesting talks, and ignored four reminders from Kathmandu. New Delhi has been advised by Arvind Deo, its canny ambassador to Nepal, that King

Birendra cannot hold out for long. After a few weeks of flag-waving, the Nepalese have begun blaming their King for the shortages of essential commodities. Five student groups have urged the Nepalese Prime Minister to settle and the banned Nepali Congress is using the discon-



Rajiv Gandhi (right) with King Birendra: waiting for him to come around

tent to launch a movement against Birendra.

At present, the betting is that New Delhi will wait till Nepal is desperate and then force its terms on Kathmandu. In the process, it will probably alienate the Nepalese but then, isn't that what being a regional super power is all about.

SAARC was born in December 1985 at Dhaka. There is some substance in the charge that SAARC has not progressed beyond fringe issues and token gestures, such as declaring 1989 as 'SAARC year against drug abuse' and 1990 as 'SAARC year of the girl child'.

Of course, there has been greater cultural interaction between the member countries and several agreements have been signed such as the convention on suppression of terrorism and the South

Asian food security reserve. But the most important issues, which are inevitably bilateral in nature (and thus out of bounds according to the SAARC charter), have not been thrashed out. At SAARC meets, leaders have religiously proclaimed that the forum is meant to emphasise what binds the seven countries rather than what divides them.

SAARC's real contribution, however, as a diplomat of a member country pointed out, is the opportunity it offers

leaders of its member countries for 'informal consultations'. The Rajiv-Bertazir tête-à-tête at Daaman-e-Koh in Pakistan signalled the beginning of a new era in bilateral relations.

Bangladesh, as the originator of the SAARC idea, is naturally worried about the future of the organisation and was upset about the cancellation of the ministerial meet at Islamabad. Its foreign minister, Anisul Islam Mahmud, declared in Dhaka that the postponement of the conference was likely to hamper the functioning of SAARC. Mahmud termed the circumstances that led to the cancellation as "most undesir-

able" and said that efforts should be made to convene the meeting at the earliest.

Will SAARC survive the latest setback? A diplomat of a SAARC country noted, "South Asian regional cooperation without India has no meaning. And South Asian regional cooperation with India in a position to exert pressure on smaller countries has no meaning." President Jayewardene in an emotional speech at Islamabad during the last SAARC summit called India the "key to SAARC".

At an international SAARC workshop in Dhaka on 24 March, 1988, there was unanimous expression of concern about India's "pre-eminence" in the region.

Most of India's neighbours are suspicious of its motives and, at the same time, conscious of its power and influence. Unless India inspires confidence in its smaller neighbours, regional cooperation in South Asia will be only a concept, not a reality.

Patralekha Chatterjee/New Delhi

CONFRONTATION

Relations between India and Sri Lanka plummet to an all-time low as President Premadasa copes with internal strife

It was as if there was no cause for despair. During all of last week—save a short helicopter hop to attend Cabinet in Colombo—President Ranasinghe Premadasa was cosily ensconced in the hill town of Mahiyangana, which lies east of the capital. There, as Sri Lankan television captured in vivid detail, a smiling President parcelled out goodies to grateful and fawning villagers, listened intently to their problems and affectionately tweaked little children's ears.

Premadasa was clearly enjoying himself. For Gam Udawa—the 11-year-old village rehabilitation scheme that aims at developing a different region of the island every year—is his very own baby. Premadasa has overseen the scheme with religious devotion and this year's Gam Udawa was all the more special being his first as President. Premadasa, it seemed, was in no mood to trade in his 'pastoral pilgrimage' for politics.

Yet, it was politics that occupied the minds of his people. For during the 11-day Gam Udawa festivities, Sri Lanka slipped into what could become the most serious crisis it has ever faced. On the diplomatic front, India's response to the President's demand that the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) go home by the end of July was unfriendly. The Indians made it clear that there was no way the IPKF would leave by that deadline and that Sri Lankan 'black-mail'—such as its decision to stay away from the SAARC foreign ministers' meeting at Islamabad—wouldn't work. Worse—at least from Premadasa's point of view—was the Indian reaction to his demand that the IPKF call off its operations against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The answer once again was 'no way'. Moreover, there was no let-up in the Indian army's recently intensified offensive against the Tamil militant organisation. Last week's official Tiger count read: 52 dead (possibly a record of sorts). The fear is that the negotiations currently under way

R. Premadasa and Rajiv Gandhi (insets) fell out over the withdrawal of Indian troops, as the IPKF steps up its offensive against the LTTE



WHO'S WHO AMONG THE TAMIL MILITANT GROUPS

The origins of Sri Lankan Tamil militancy have not been adequately understood and remain somewhat obscure. In the early Seventies, the Tamil Manavi Peravi, better known as the Tamil Youth Front (TYF), was formed under the patronage of the Tamil United Front (TUF), which later went on to become the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). While it would be inaccurate to describe the TYF as a militant outfit, it attracted many youths who were not averse to using violence for political ends.

By the mid-Seventies, some TYF leaders had established their own militant groups. For some time, there existed only three or four organisations, but with the advent of the Eighties, the Tamil guerrilla movement splintered into a large number of groups. Many of these failed to gather an adequate following and internecine rivalry took care of some of the rest. Today, there are only a few which matter.



LTTE's Velupillai Prabhakaran: refused to accept the accord and entered into a bloody battle with the IPKF

LTTE: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam emerged the most powerful group in the early Eighties. It is also perhaps the most brutal (the Tigers have savaged rival militant organisations), the best disciplined

and the most committed (the cyanide capsules that they wear around their necks in the event of capture testify to this).

Its leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran's refusal to accept the Indo-Sri Lanka accord meant having to face the might of the Indian army. Two years of warring with the IPKF may have weakened the Tigers militarily, but their popularity in the north remains undiminished. Recently, the LTTE tried to keep the IPKF off its back by negotiating directly with Colombo—ostensibly to find a way of being accommodated within the democratic process. But from all appearances, the turnaround is only tactical—aimed at pressuring the government to withdraw the IPKF.

EPRLF: The Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front attracted widespread notice only a few years ago, after the abduction of an American couple it suspected of being CIA agents. Low caste Tamils form its main constituency and the group enjoys grassroots support in the island's east. The Marxist outfit has always boasted of a strong ideological framework. Organised demonstrations in support of the Palestinian struggle, the Sandinistas and so on have been very much a part of its activities.

The EPRLF, which survived the LTTE's wrath in mid-'86 (when some 70 members were killed and 500 forced to surrender), now runs the Provincial Council in the North-Eastern Province. The Varadaraja Perumal led government, which is propped up by the IPKF, is nervous that it may be dismissed by Colombo



EPRLF's Varadaraja Perumal: heads the North-Eastern Provincial Council and is nervous about being dismissed by Colombo

in order to appease the Tigers. The group, which accepted the terms of the accord, is now preparing to return to arms in the face of such a prospect.

PLOT: The Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam is a breakaway group of the LTTE that was formed by Uma Maheswaran in 1980. Maheswaran and Prabhakaran—once good buddies—fell out over the former's affair with a pretty young thing called Urmilla. Prabhakaran opposed it by arguing that "this sort of intimacy is against our code of conduct". Later, the two were engaged in a shoot-out in Madras.

PLOT was once believed to be the largest group after the LTTE and operated both in the Jaffna peninsula and the island's east. Its importance also derived from Maheswaran's close links with the M.G. Ramachandran government in Tamil Nadu. Today, however, the outfit has been marginalised—both due to poor organisation and Prabhakaran's personal animus.

ENDLF: The Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front was formed three years ago by some breakaway members of PLOT. Sri

between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE may be jeopardised if the IPKF cannot be prevailed upon to hold off.

Things were no better on the home front. The government was forced to declare a state of emergency to meet the growing violence engineered by the Sinhala-extremist Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Colombo's awareness of how serious the threat had become was revealed last Saturday when over 3,000 'rebels' (read: JVP members and sympathisers) in the capital and the Southern Province were rounded up for interrogation under the new provisions, which

give the army and the police unquestioned authority to make arrests and detentions.

The operation followed a 'curfew' announced by the JVP five days earlier (on 26 June), which virtually paralysed the island. The underground organisation threatened to kill anyone who ventured out of home, and Colombo—like most other cities in the south—wore a deserted look. All commercial establishments were closed and the only newspaper to appear the following day was the government-owned *Daily News*.

Meanwhile, the JVP-supported public transport workers' strike entered its

third week and became a severe embarrassment to the government. The strike has seriously disrupted normal life in such far-flung cities as Colombo where no rapid transport system exists. Attendance at private commercial establishments and government offices has been dismal—in some places as low as 15 per cent. The transport ministry, which initially threatened to sack the strikers, later climbed down and continued negotiations. But no easy solution appears to be in sight with the government maintaining that it cannot meet the demands and the workers staying away—obviously preferring to risk their

Lankan intelligence believes that the group was sponsored and aided by India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), which helped it to operate in the north and the east to counter the intransigent LTTE.

Led by P. Rajan, the ENDLF is the junior partner in the EPRLF-led coalition government in the North-Eastern Province. Like the EPRLF, the ENDLF is crucial to India's strategy of making the Tamil Provincial Council viable and strong.



EROS'
Balakumar:
Instrumental in
preparing the
ground for
LTTE-Colombo
talks

EROS: The Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students was established, oddly enough, by an elderly Marxist in London in 1975. For long, EROS was viewed as the intellectual face of Tamil militancy and sometimes dismissed as a small coterie of Britain-based beer-swilling ideologues who know more about books than bombs or bazookas.

This perception has changed somewhat of late. Although EROS is by no means a powerful outfit, its importance today derives from the fact that it is the only militant organisation which the LTTE is well disposed to. Its leader, Balakumar, is believed to have been instrumental in preparing the ground for the LTTE-Colombo talks.

TELO: The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation is, by some accounts, the oldest militant group. It was once strong militarily and patronised by the DMK's M. Karunanidhi. However, serious infighting within the leadership undermined the TELO's strength and led to defections and breakaways.

The group's attempt to stage a recovery was thwarted when the LTTE, in mid-'86, launched a murderous campaign against it. More than 150 members were killed and its leader, Sabaratnam ('Tall Sn'), was shot dead in Jaffna. Today, the outfit is led by Selvam, who is based in the island's north.

OTHERS: It is difficult to say how many Tamil militant groups exist today, but Sri Lankan intelligence identified as many as 35 in 1985. Many of these were formed after the Sinhala chauvinist-inspired race riots in July 1983. The activities of some of them have been limited to pamphlet-distribution and poster campaigns.

Among the groups which operated a few years ago were those with fancy names, such as the Eagles Movement (EM), the Tamil Eelam Blood Movement (TEBM), the Tamil Eelam Liberation Cobras (TELC), the Guerrillas Aspiring for Tamil Eelam (GATE)—little was known about them then and even less is known about them today.

A TELO
militant:
serious
infighting
has
undermined
the group's
strength



Negotiations currently under way between the LTTE and Colombo may be jeopardised if the IPKF cannot be prevailed upon to let up its offensive

jobs than their lives to the JVP.

The transport strike has brought Colombo port to a near standstill—a matter of grave concern for an island nation which imports everything from Rolls Royces to rice. Attendance at the port has fallen, according to government estimates, to under 50 per cent. But the real problem is the unavailability of drivers for government-owned lorries in the face of the JVP threat. Many of the ships waiting to be docked and cleared—as many as 17 on 28 June—carry food: 15,000 tonnes of rice, sugar and flour according to one estimate. The government's move to get the navy to work the port has eased the crisis somewhat and it claims that there is no cause for worry as the buffer stocks of rice and flour are sufficient to last three months. Yet, there are fears that if the present situation continues for much longer, the country could be faced with a food crisis.

The problems that Sri Lanka is facing on both fronts—at home and with India—are, of course, linked. Premadasa had the domestic situation very much in mind when he called for the withdrawal of the IPKF by July-end. By April this year, the JVP had begun posing a serious threat to the government. During March alone, a staggering 3,000 people were killed in JVP-related violence. Later, the proscribed organisation's underground leader, Rohana Wijeweera, demanded that all Indian goods be boycotted and said that the cost of disobeying the order would be 'punishment'. The 'order' is remembered even today. In Petta, Colombo's bustling market area, shopkeepers have taken all Indian goods off the shelves. Indian saris, for instance—once a very popular buy—are virtually unavailable. Only after a customer convincingly establishes his credentials is a shopkeeper willing to produce a few samples that he has hidden behind the counter. Then there was the statement asking all Indians to leave the island—a call that led all officials of the Indian high commission to take refuge in the Taj Samudra and the Galadhari Meridien, two of the many new five-star hotels on the capital's Galle Face Esplanade. There were also the 'curfews' (the JVP expression for *bandhs*) which left many parts of the south paralysed.

To Premadasa, it was clear that the JVP's appeal lay largely in its adoption of a stridently anti-India posture. It was not an unreasonable assumption as the organisation was in something of a limbo a couple of years ago. The July 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan accord and the subsequent induction of the IPKF were the catalysts for the JVP to reassert itself.

COUNTDOWN TO THE IMPASSE

1982

- India starts training Tamil guerrillas

1983 onwards

- Tamils create havoc in north Sri Lanka

Arms laid down by LTTE



May 1987

- Lanka launches military crackdown on LTTE and other Tamil militant groups

4 June, 1987

- India airdrops supplies to Tamils. Sri Lanka protests.

29 July, 1987

- Rajiv Gandhi and Junius Jayewardene sign India-Sri Lanka accord. Militants agree to surrender arms.

5 August, 1987

- LTTE makes token surrender of arms.

9 August, 1987

- LTTE alleges ceasefire violations by Sri Lankan forces.



IPKF receives supplies flown in by the IAF

13 September, 1987

- Warring among Tamil militant groups.

6 October, 1987

- LTTE resumes attacks

10 October, 1987

- IPKF says LTTE has not disarmed, launches action.

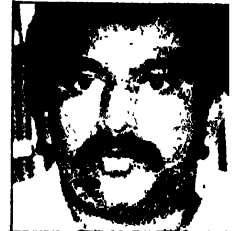
October 1987 onwards

- LTTE and India now

enemies, and IPKF mired an unwinnable war.

15 January, 1988

- LTTE chief appeals to Rajiv Gandhi to call off military offensive.



Velupillai Prabhakaran

13 March, 1988

- India rejects LTTE's appeal for a ceasefire.

By asking the IPKF to go home, Premadasa was attempting, among other things, to 'hijack' the JVP campaign and pull the political carpet from beneath its feet.

From all appearances, the strategy hasn't worked—not so far at any rate. For the JVP, it appears, has simply changed tack. The 'India go home' call is not heard as often as before. As the posters which recently appeared on walls in and around Colombo testify, it has given precedence to other demands—such as the dissolution of Parliament and the holding of fresh presidential elections. In doing so, the JVP has identified its target (Premadasa) and demonstrated its ability to make a determined bid for power through its tactics of 'curfews' and terror.

The lack of a positive response, either from the JVP or the people, does not seem to have deterred Premadasa. Over the last week, he set aside developmental work in Mahiyangana now and then to make hard-hitting speeches that reiterated his resolve to see the Indian army out of the island. Government spokesmen in Colombo also made out that Sri Lanka was in no mood to withdraw the demand. The strategy appeared to be directed at embarrassing the Indians into leaving. Already, much has been made in the local press about an Amnesty International report which details the IPKF's violation of human rights in the north and east.

The government's decision to stay away from the SAARC meet demonstrated that it was willing to go international with the issue. Argued Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Ranjan Wijeratne,

while explaining his country's reasons for not attending, "(SAARC's objectives) cannot be achieved unless the member states agree not to interfere in the affairs of other members or take undue advantage of their size and prominence." Hinting that Sri Lanka may also pull out of the SAARC summit to be held later this year, Wijeratne added: "We are aware of the rule in the SAARC charter that bilateral issues cannot be raised during the deliberations; so even if we do attend the meeting, we would not be able to present Sri Lanka's predicament."

By raising the 'bilateral issues' question, Sri Lanka was identifying itself with

the other SAARC members who, in opposition to India, have been demanding that such matters be discussed. And if it does stay away from the summit, it would be a major setback for one of India's principal foreign policy initiatives. Unconfirmed reports have it that the Sri Lankan government is also considering raising the issue of the IPKF's presence at the United Nations and the International Court of Justice.

Almost every political party in Sri Lanka is in agreement with Premadasa over one thing: that the IPKF should go. Their differences with him arise over the manner in which he has

Deserted streets of Colombo: a JVP 'curfew' paralyses the island



May, 1988

IPKF launches offensive the north-east.

June, 1988

First phase of withdrawal IPKF.

19 November 1988

- Election to the North-Eastern Provincial Council is held.
- EPRLF-ENDLF coalition forms government with Varadaraia Perumal as chief



Indo-Sri Lankan accord is signed



Premadasa

minister. LTTE does not participate.

First week of January 1989

- IPKF makes a sham withdrawal of three infantry battalions.

26 April, 1989

- IPKF withdraws some

troops to appease Premadasa.

May 1989

- LTTE does deal with Premadasa.

1 June, 1989

- President Premadasa

demands the withdrawal of the IPKF.

2 July, 1989

- IPKF ignores Premadasa's ultimatum and launches a major offensive against the LTTE.



An EPRLF election meeting

tried to force its departure and the timing of his announcement. Says Dinesh Gunawardene, MP and leader of the left-wing Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, which has opposed the IPKF's induction right from the very beginning, "We are for the withdrawal, but it is a matter that should be dealt with diplomatically." Ossie Abeygoonasekara, leader of the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party, who lost in the presidential race last year, echoes a similar view, "Our party is against the presence of any foreign troops, be they American, Russian or Indian. But the Indian army came at the invitation of the Sri Lankan government and so the question of its continued

presence should have been sorted out bilaterally." Some like the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front's A. Amrithalingam warn that an IPKF pull-out at this juncture could prove disastrous. "The removal of the Indian army now will result in a bloodbath between the various Tamil groups. So, it should be asked to stay on until an alternative machinery to enforce peace is evolved," he says.

The Indian reaction to Premadasa's call was dictated, partly at least, by a sense of pique. To be summarily told to go was bad enough, but coming as it did when the Indian army was already preparing to pull out was intolerable. For

Rajiv Gandhi, there was also the matter of being politically embarrassed in what is, after all, an election year. Understandably, no Prime Minister would like to face the electorate as someone who was kicked around by a tiny neighbour and a signatory to an accord that was forced to die a miserable death. His attitude to the diplomatic crisis has been questionable but consistent: India will leave only when it thinks that the accord has been satisfactorily implemented.

The result has been a diplomatic war of words over what the provisions of the accord really mean. The Indian argument for staying on hinges on one clause of the agreement, which says that "the Government of India will underwrite and guarantee the resolutions" of the accord. New Delhi has interpreted this to mean that India is obliged to see that all the provisions of the accord are implemented—particularly the one which relates to more power being devolved on the Tamil-majority areas. The suggestion is that the IPKF's presence is necessary to fulfil India's obligation of seeing the accord through.

The argument is specious, to say the least. For one, it doesn't explain why India had planned—as early as January this year—to withdraw the IPKF by the end of December. Did it have any firm guarantee that the Sri Lankan government would, by that time, implement those resolutions that it had promised to do under the accord, such as the one that relates to the devolution of power? And then, how could it be confident of fulfilling its own obligations by the end of December, such as enforcing the "cessation of hostilities" either between Colombo and the LTTE or between the

LTTE members led by A. Balasingham (centre) arrive in Colombo for talks: tactical manoeuvre



various militant groups? Secondly—and perhaps more importantly—there is nothing in the accord which links the presence of the IPKF to issues such as the devolution of power. The accord clearly states that the Indian army “may be invited by the President of Sri Lanka...if so required”. Doesn’t it then stand to reason that the President may withdraw the invitation whenever he wishes—that is, when the IPKF is no longer required? It would need an ingenious legal brain to establish otherwise.

It is another matter, of course, whether Premadasa could have achieved his objective with a little more tact. Why did he demand the IPKF’s withdrawal when it was planning to leave anyway? To outflank the JVP may be the main reason, but not the whole answer. Premadasa had opposed the induction of the IPKF from the outset. As Prime Minister, he could hardly afford to publicly criticise President Jayewardene for entering into the accord, but he made his

If India and Sri Lanka do not work out a face-saving solution before the end of July, relations between the two countries may cease to be at an all-time low; they may very well cease to exist

disapproval known by staying away from the signing ceremony. His disaffection didn’t stem only from his being a ‘traditional India-hater’; it had to do, in large measure, with the perfectly reasonable belief that Sri Lanka ought to sort out its internal problems on its own.

Premadasa conducted his election campaign on a manifesto that promised the withdrawal of the IPKF and, in his first speech as President, invited both the LTTE and the JVP for unconditional talks with his government. It was perhaps the first overt indication that he was prepared to deal with the domestic situation without India’s mediation. Says Cabinet minister S. Thondaman, who warns against a premature IPKF withdrawal, “The President—rightly or wrongly—made the pull-out an issue in his election manifesto. He is the kind of man who has to see it through.”

The Indians were alive to the prospect that the accord would be endangered in the event of Premadasa’s victory. According to one theory, New Delhi knew that it would have to withdraw the moment he was elected. (Premadasa’s main presidential rival, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was also opposed to the accord and the IPKF’s presence, but for reasons best known to South Block, it believed that it could make her come

“The IPKF is required”

L.L. Mehrotra, high commissioner to Sri Lanka, presents the Indian position

Lakhan Lal Mehrotra, who was appointed high commissioner to Sri Lanka on 24 April, shares nothing of his predecessor J.N. Dixit’s style. Dixit seemed to thrive on controversy, loved being in the public eye and always had time for the press. Mehrotra, on the other hand, is a low-profile bureaucrat who has been somewhat press-shy. Some suggest that this may be because he is not yet completely conversant with Sri Lankan affairs. But Mehrotra was relaxed, confident and articulate when he fielded SUNDAY’s questions. Excerpts from an interview:

SUNDAY: Is it fair to say that Ind-Sri Lankan relations are now at an all-time low?

L.L. Mehrotra: It is difficult to comment on this. Because even in the aftermath of the India-Sri Lanka accord, a rather alarming situation had developed here. But I would say that there has been a fresh wave of tension during the last two weeks. Added to this, Sri Lanka has been facing a very difficult situation internally. In my view, the two are interconnected.

How?

The President (Premadasa) wants to meet the internal situation—that is, the challenge of the JVP. The JVP has always had an anti-India plank. The President wants to suggest that he is the one trying to send the IPKF back. He wants to divert the atten-



“Who wants to stay on? The IPKF is here to do a job. Let that entire process be implemented and then the IPKF goes. And if anybody had an earnest desire to withdraw the IPKF, it was us”

tion of the people somehow or the other from the internal pressures.

One could also argue that the President’s demand that the IPKF leave has to do with the LTTE turnaround.

It is entirely possible. The LTTE has also been asking for the IPKF’s withdrawal. You could say that there is a certain community of interest.

Is India justified in keeping the IPKF on? After all, there is nothing in the accord which suggests that the IPKF’s presence is necessary to fulfil India’s obligation of “underwriting and guaranteeing” its proposals.

No. The IPKF is here to enforce and guarantee the cessation of hostilities...

But only “if so required”.

But it is required. That is why it was invited. The clause you are referring to relates to the rationale for the IPKF coming to Sri Lanka. It is true that it came at the request of the Sri Lankan government. But the accord does not lay down the procedures for the withdrawal of the IPKF. Therefore, it follows, that its withdrawal is a matter which both governments have to discuss and come to a conclusion about.

But the important fact is that the Indian government had been discussing the IPKF’s withdrawal with the Sri Lankan government. Moreover,

around.) It is not an implausible view. For the date on which the first batch of IPKF soldiers was withdrawn coincided with Premadasa's swearing-in as President in January this year. In India, this was widely interpreted as a token gesture to appease a President who was against the force's presence. But it is more than possible that it was a signal to indicate that India was prepared to leave.

Whatever the truth, India had other reasons for wanting to withdraw. The operation in Sri Lanka was expensive (Rs 3 crores a day, according to one estimate) and, moreover, seemed increasingly futile (the LTTE may have been losing men but they were winning popular support and sympathy). By early March, the Indians had already finalised a withdrawal plan with the Sri Lankan government and Rajiv Gandhi began telling the press that it was time to think seriously about getting the boys back home. Yet, oddly enough, the decision to pull out did not lead to a scaling down

the two governments had already arrived at certain conclusions about it. And then, the foreign minister, Mr Ranjan Wijeratne, even told Parliament on 31 March that a time-frame for a withdrawal had been discussed and accepted. So, what was the (Sri Lankan government's) problem?

How do you react to President Premadasa's statement that 90 per cent of Sri Lankans want the IPKF to go as this percentage of the electorate voted for pro-pull-out candidates in the presidential election? The implicit suggestion perhaps being that the IPKF is a force of occupation because it is in Sri Lanka against the wishes of the large majority of the people.

But who wants to stay on? The IPKF is here to do a job. Let that entire process be implemented and then the IPKF goes. And if anybody had an earnest desire to withdraw the IPKF, it was us. We had already provided for this well before the Sri Lankan President began talking of withdrawal. We knew he had made such a commitment to the electorate. And we ourselves came out soon after the presidential election with a plan for withdrawal. And they were privy to this.

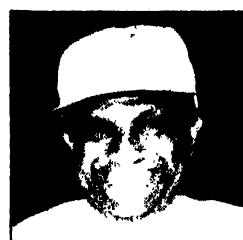
Interviewed by Mukund Padmanabhan/Colombo

SHOULD THE IPKF GO HOME?

The Sri Lankans say yes, but the dispute is over when and how



A. Amrithalingam
Tamil United Liberation Front



R. Premadasa
United National Party



Oesle Abeygoonasekara
Sri Lanka Mahajana Party

"IT should be asked to stay on until an alternative to enforce peace is found."

"OUR desire is to see that the last Indian soldier leaves Sri Lanka by 29 July."

"THE question of its continued presence should have been sorted out bilaterally."

of IPKF operations. On the contrary, there was no let-up in the intensified offensive against the LTTE, which began this January.

There was a good reason for maintaining the heat. India did not want to give the impression that its army was retreating from Sri Lanka. From its point of view, it was far more 'honourable' to knock the LTTE around a bit before calling it a day. It might then have been able to argue, somewhat disingenuously, that there was no need to stay on any longer as its obligations under the accord had been fulfilled.

It was the intensified Indian offensive which gave Premadasa what he saw as a golden political opportunity. The LTTE was badly hit and needed to get the IPKF off its back. By early April, the ground was being prepared for direct negotiations with Colombo. The Tigers had come around to the view that this was the only way to keep the IPKF at arm's length.

With this, Premadasa believed he had just what he wanted—a wonderful political slogan to rally the country together. 'IPKF go home' suddenly had a magical quality about it. It could, he reckoned, prove immensely popular with the majority Sinhalas, who have always resented the presence of the Indian army; defuse the JVP campaign by stealing its most important political demand; and persuade the Tigers to function within the democratic framework.

After the conclusion of the first round of talks between his government and the

LTTE in May, Premadasa was convinced that the slogan would work its three-way magic. A couple of days before the second round was slated to be held, he went public with it in his now famous 1 June speech.

There are two questions that Premadasa will have to address himself to sooner or later. What his slogan has achieved. And whether it was wise to adopt it in the circumstances. The answer to the first is precious little. The JVP has not been appeased—on the contrary, its campaign for the dissolution of the government has only intensified; the majority of the Sinhalas now believe that Premadasa's first responsibility is to check JVP violence and that therefore the IPKF's presence is necessary to 'secure the northern front' while the Sri Lankan army deals with the south; and, finally, the LTTE-Colombo talks have made no substantive progress, despite being two months old.

As for whether it was politic, the answer also appears to be in the negative. For a start, the Tiger turnaround was almost certainly a tactical manoeuvre—directed at securing the short-term objective of keeping the IPKF off its back. The LTTE has not yet formally renounced separatism and it strains the imagination to believe that it has suddenly undergone a genuine change of heart. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that Premadasa can afford, in the present circumstances, to accede to even their non-separatist demands, such as the



THE ACCORD AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Rajiv Gandhi has claimed that India will pull out the IPKF only if all provisions of the India-Sri Lanka accord are fulfilled. What clauses of the agreement remain to be implemented? D.B. Wijetunge, Sri Lankan Prime Minister, recently placed a statement in Parliament listing the obligations of the two countries under the accord and whether they had been put into effect or not. Excerpts from it:

OBLIGATIONS OF SRI LANKA	STATUS	REMARKS
Permit the Northern and Eastern Provinces to form one administrative unit from the date of election to Provincial Council to date of referendum.	Implemented.	—
Hold referendum in the Eastern Province on or before December 1988 to decide whether merger should continue or not.	Not implemented.	Referendum originally fixed for 31 December, 1988, has been postponed twice and is now scheduled to be held in early 1990.
Create conditions to enable all persons displaced due to ethnic violence to return to areas from where they were displaced.	Not fully implemented.	An appreciable number have still not returned.
Cessation of hostilities to come into effect within 48 hours; militant groups to surrender all arms within 72 hours of cessation of hostilities.	Not implemented.	Sri Lanka immediately stopped all military operations in north and east. Militant groups ceased hostilities, but this was only temporary. The LTTE was engaged in open hostilities against the IPKF by September 1987.
Use for law enforcement and maintenance of security the same organisations and mechanisms of government as in the rest of the country.	Being implemented.	Under the 13th Amendment and Provincial Councils Act, the same mechanisms will be used in all parts of Sri Lanka.
Make special efforts to rehabilitate militant youths.	Not implemented.	Will be done at the appropriate time.

OBLIGATIONS OF INDIA	STATUS	REMARKS
Take all steps to ensure that Indian territory is not used for activities prejudicial to the unity, integrity and security of Sri Lanka.	—	Sri Lanka expects India to have fulfilled this undertaking.
Give military assistance to Sri Lanka, when requested, to implement the agreement.	Being implemented.	On request, India sent the IPKF. Sri Lanka has now asked that the IPKF be withdrawn by 29 July, 1989.
Cooperate with Sri Lanka to ensure the physical safety and security of all communities inhabiting the north and the east.	Not fully implemented.	India has assumed this obligation almost in its entirety because Sri Lankan security forces were excluded from operations in the north and the east. The IPKF took only a token Sri Lankan police presence to assist them.

permanent merger of the North and Eastern Provinces. (How would the JVP take to this?)

By proceeding on the assumption that he can persuade the Tigers to join the political mainstream, Premadasa has taken a huge gamble. The least he will have to do in order to convince them is allow them to run the North-Eastern Province. This would mean dissolving the Varadaraja Perumal-led EPRLF-ENLDF government, which, in turn, would spell other problems. The EPRLF has already indicated that it will declare 'independence' from Sri Lanka in case of such an eventuality. Moreover, it would only harden India's resolve to stay on. The EPRLF is crucial to India since it is the only pro-accord Tamil militant group with a mass base.

As things stand today, Premadasa's first priority is to find a way of meeting the JVP threat. Last Saturday's massive crackdown on the 'rebels' was an indication that he has realised this. If the JVP-supported strikes persist, then the island is in danger of slipping into chaos. Already, there are some who talk of the possibility of military rule, though, at this stage, it is a view that appears unduly alarmist. What is true, however, is that the opinions of the army and police are already beginning to be taken into account. The declaration of emergency, for instance, was made at their behest.

Premadasa's next priority is to find a way out of the impasse with India. The 1 July call—far from making him a hero with the Sinhala—has rebounded on him and become a political embarrassment. India has turned down his every demand and responded to his call to stop fighting the LTTE by stepping up the offensive last week. It also flew in more army personnel—5,000 according to one estimate—into Trincomalee last Thursday. The hero who would rid his country of the foreign presence now appears to run the risk of being perceived as the man who tempted it into staying on.

The key is to find a face-saving solution for both sides. It is believed that consultations between India and Sri Lanka are already on to find a way to achieve this. One possibility is for India to pull out, say, two months after Premadasa's July-end deadline. India could then argue that it left only when it thought fit to do so and Premadasa could make out that he got the IPKF to leave, even if a little later than he would have liked.

If such a stratagem is not worked out before the end of July, India-Sri Lanka relations may cease to be at an all-time low; they may very well cease to exist.

Mukund Padmanabhan/Colombo

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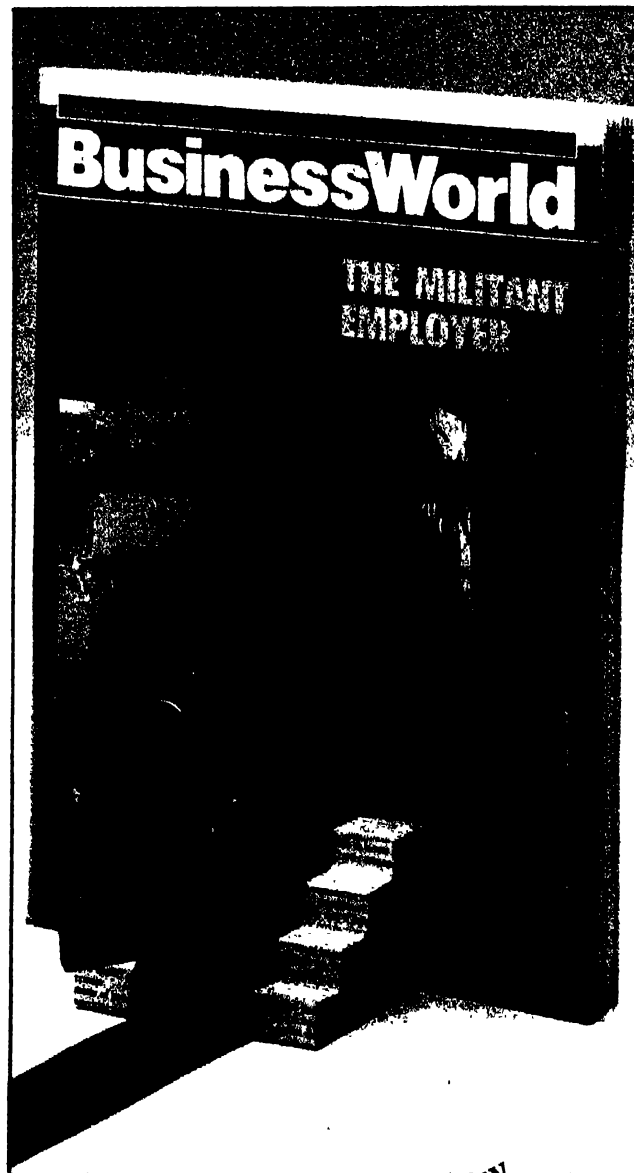
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5/12/89	DEPOSIT ON AC...../1175/4710840/1/4	\$1.00
5/12/89	LOCAL PHONE...../1175/3865510/1/4	\$1.00
5/12/89	LOCAL PHONE...../1175/53203/1/0	\$255.00
5/12/89	LOCAL PHONE...../1175/53204/1/0	\$30.60
5/12/89	ROOM...../1175/51976/1/0	\$255.00
5/12/89	ROOM TAX...../1175/51977/1/0	\$30.60
5/12/89	ROOM...../1175/7722121/1/4	\$1.00
5/12/89	ROOM TAX...../1175/62803/1/0	\$255.00
5/13/89	ROOM...../1175/62804/1/0	\$30.60
5/13/89	LOCAL PHONE...../1175/4710840/1/4	\$1.00
5/14/89	ROOM...../1175/4710840/1/4	\$18.23
5/14/89	ROOM TAX...../1175/4710840/1/4	\$120.97CR
5/15/89	LOCAL PHONE...../1175	
5/15/89	LONG DISTANCE PHONE...../1175	
5/15/89	9111712976/1/4 12120/108	
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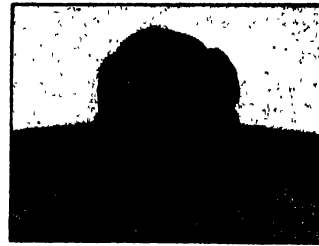
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UDAYAN SHARMA



Hawaiian holiday

The full story of Arun Nehru's foreign jaunt, with documents and pictures that call for an official investigation

A year after V.P. Singh's electoral triumph in Allahabad, who can forget the slogan: "Raja nahin, fakir hai"? Who can forget the campaign the Raja fought against those who stashed the nation's wealth abroad? Against those who flaunted their millions—earned probably from a kickback on a shady deal—while back in India, the poor struggled to find two meals?

I certainly haven't forgotten any of this. But it is beginning to seem as though Vishwanath Pratap Singh has.

From the time V.P. Singh made up with Arun Nehru and conspired with him to try and topple Rajiv Gandhi, one question has remained unanswered. How does Singh reconcile his stand on clean

politics with having Arun Nehru as a friend?

The Raja will not tell us. Each time the question has been posed, he has resorted to banalities—none of which, incidentally, shows Nehru in a particularly favourable light. (Samples: "I will take even a convict's help" or "When your car is stuck, everybody is welcome to push it".)

But now the time has come for V.P. Singh and the rest of the Opposition to come to terms with the Arun Nehru factor. What does this man stand for? Is he as clean as a campaigner against corruption—which is what V.P. Singh claims to be—would require of his colleagues? And where does his money come from?

"Rumours," say Nehru's friends. "Prove that he has any money stashed away abroad." Two weeks ago, I posed some awkward questions about Nehru's foreign jaunt. I detailed the kind of money Nehru spent on this trip and asked where it came from. Does Nehru have access to funds outside India? If so, how? Has he, in the Raja's immortal phrase, "stashed the nation's wealth abroad"?

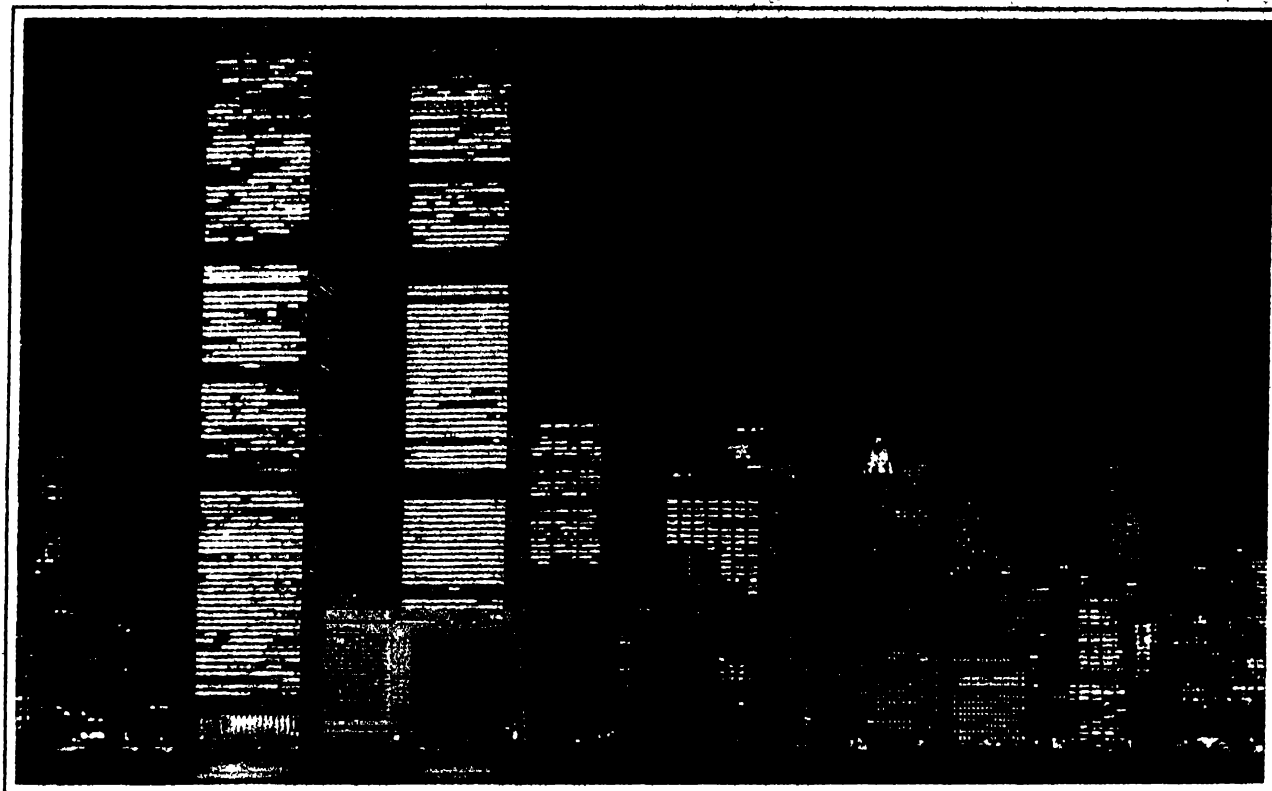
Propriety demanded that Nehru reply to the charges, especially as the SUNDAY report was picked up by several other newspapers. Strangely, he has issued no public denial and not disputed my account of his holiday and its expenditure.

In private, however, he has been more vocal, ringing up buddies and

The time has come to ask some tough questions about Arun Nehru. Where does he get the money to make his foreign jaunts? And how does he reconcile his stand on clean politics with having Arun Nehru as a friend?

MAN OF THE PEOPLE

Arun Nehru and family holiday in the island resort of Maui and (extreme left below) his hotel bill in Century Plaza, Los Angeles, California: no doubt the Reserve Bank released exchange for the trip



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'friendly' journalists and denouncing the story as a fraud and a lie. He thinks he is on safe ground because, after all, who can ever prove quite what he did in Hawaii, Los Angeles or London? Who can document how much he spent? Or establish who he phoned?

For all these reasons, Nehru has remained smug. So far, he has got away with everything: in fact, he is even Mr Clean's right-hand man. So, who is going to catch him out now?

Alas, Nehru has not been so lucky this time. We can substantiate every single charge. I know where he went; what he spent; where he stayed; and who he phoned.

There are documents to prove it. And there are photographs. (A few of which, showing the man of the people sunning himself in Hawaii, appear on these pages.)

On 30 April, Nehru and family left Delhi for Singapore, where he stayed at the Marco Polo Hotel, among that city's more expensive establishments. From Singapore, it was off across the Pacific to Honolulu and the pricey Hotel Halekulani. Next, Nehru hired a luxury liner and went off to the tourist paradise of Maui, where he stayed at the Westin Maui.

It is at this stage that the plot curdles. First, Nehru decided not to check in under his full name. Instead, he called himself "Arun Kumar". Next, in the space provided for address in the hotel's registration slip, he filled "3/1 Moti L N N D". There is no such address in Delhi and even if there is, it is not Nehru's: he lives on Akbar Road.

The Westin Maui is an expensive luxury hotel and Nehru's room cost him \$215 a day (nearly Rs 3,500). He kept that room for five days, spending around \$1,300 (about Rs 20,000) on room and phone calls alone.

It is possible that Nehru will argue that he was somebody's guest in Hawaii (no doubt the Janata Dal has hundreds of well-heeled supporters in that island paradise) and that the bills were sent to his host. Unfortunately for him, the photocopy of his hotel bill carried on these pages shows that he paid cash. There was an advance deposit, made on 3 May, of \$430. Another deposit of \$500 was made on 6 May, a third deposit of \$350 was made on 10 May, and when he checked out, he paid another \$41.97. That's \$1,320 altogether, paid in cash by the mysterious Arun Kumar with the non-existent address who turns out to be our very own Arun Nehru.

There's more. Mr Nehru made an international call during this jaunt. He

called London from Metro Tio Marine Services. The number was 01-480-5000. And whose number do you suppose that is? It is registered to Hambros, the famous British merchant bank.

Now, why do you suppose Arun Nehru wanted to call a London bank from faraway Hawaii? Perhaps, Mr Clean, V.P. Singh, has some answers. Because Arun Nehru certainly doesn't.

From Hawaii, the Nehru caravan (including by this time, his wife, his daughter and his son-in-law Vikram Tikkoo) moved to Los Angeles. Being a man of the people, the Janata Dal leader naturally chose the pricey Century Plaza Hotel where his room cost \$255 a night. (That's just under Rs 4,000).

This time Nehru seemed to have resolved his on-going identity crisis and

Guest expected 5/16 ADVANCE PAYMENT RECEIPT DATE 5/16

NAME Nehru, M/N Arun ROOM 210

NO OF GUESTS 2 DAILY RATE \$ 210

CLERK NO. 210 NO OF DAYS 1

CASHER'S STAMP ROOM 210

STATE TAX 27

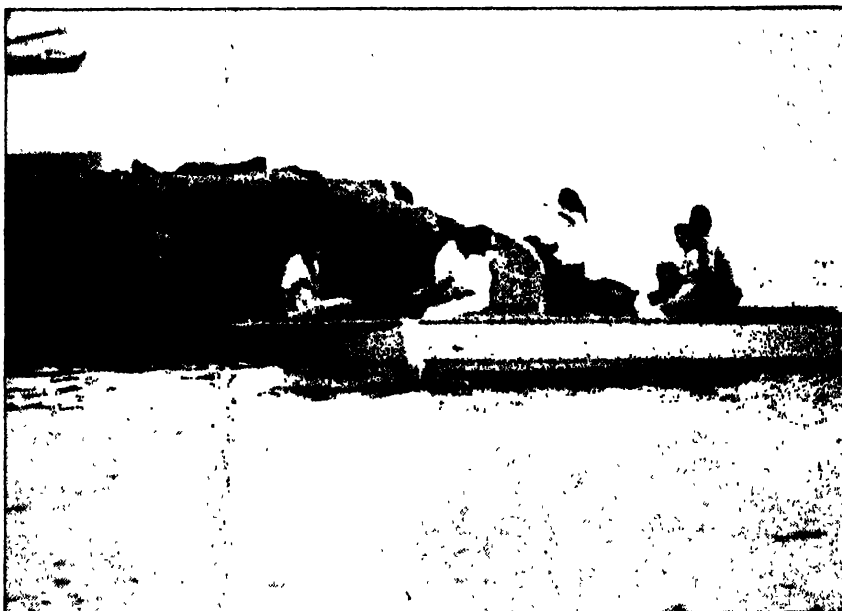
CITY TAX 2

DEPOSIT 239

TOTAL 239

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(Above) An advance payment receipt from Nehru's New York hotel; (below) Nehru en famille in Hawaii: simple lifestyle



When a well-fed paint peddler whose chief contribution to Indian politics has been money management begins to get self-righteous, then it is time to reach for the sick bag

checked in under his real name. But while he made his customary cash deposit (he handed over \$1,000 or Rs 16,000), he gave his address as care of Ranjit Chana, who lives at 16341 Sloan Drive in the plush Bel Air locality.

Who is Ranjit Chana? Till a few years ago, Mr Chana was an employee of an American firm. Now he is a millionaire. Just consider the properties owned by Ranjit and Indu Chana (as well as those on which they pay taxes). It is a fairly impressive list.

- There is a four-plex dwelling at 3005 Oceanfront Walk, Venice, California, valued at approximately \$1,300,000 (over Rs 2 crores).

- There is a beautiful home on a corner lot at 10341 Sloan Drive, Bel Air, California, that has a wonderful view of the San Fernando Valley. It has an assessed

value of \$201,628. But at current market prices, it is worth a minimum of one million dollars and could go for as much as \$1.5 million.

- Also on Sloan Drive, Bel Air, is another property. This has an assessed value of \$372,300, but once again the market price is near \$1.5 million.

- Most expensive of all is a penthouse on the exclusive Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. Chana is supposed to have just sold it and though he has yet to file records for the sale, at today's LA real estate prices, it probably went for \$2 million (nearly Rs 3 crores).

- And, though this is small potatoes for Chana, there is a lot in Kern, California worth \$30,000 (around Rs 5 lakhs).

Not bad going for a chap who used to work for a company a few years ago!

How did Chana make his money? And how is he so close to Nehru that the Janata Dal heavyweight gave his address as his own at his LA hotel, and later at his New York hotel?

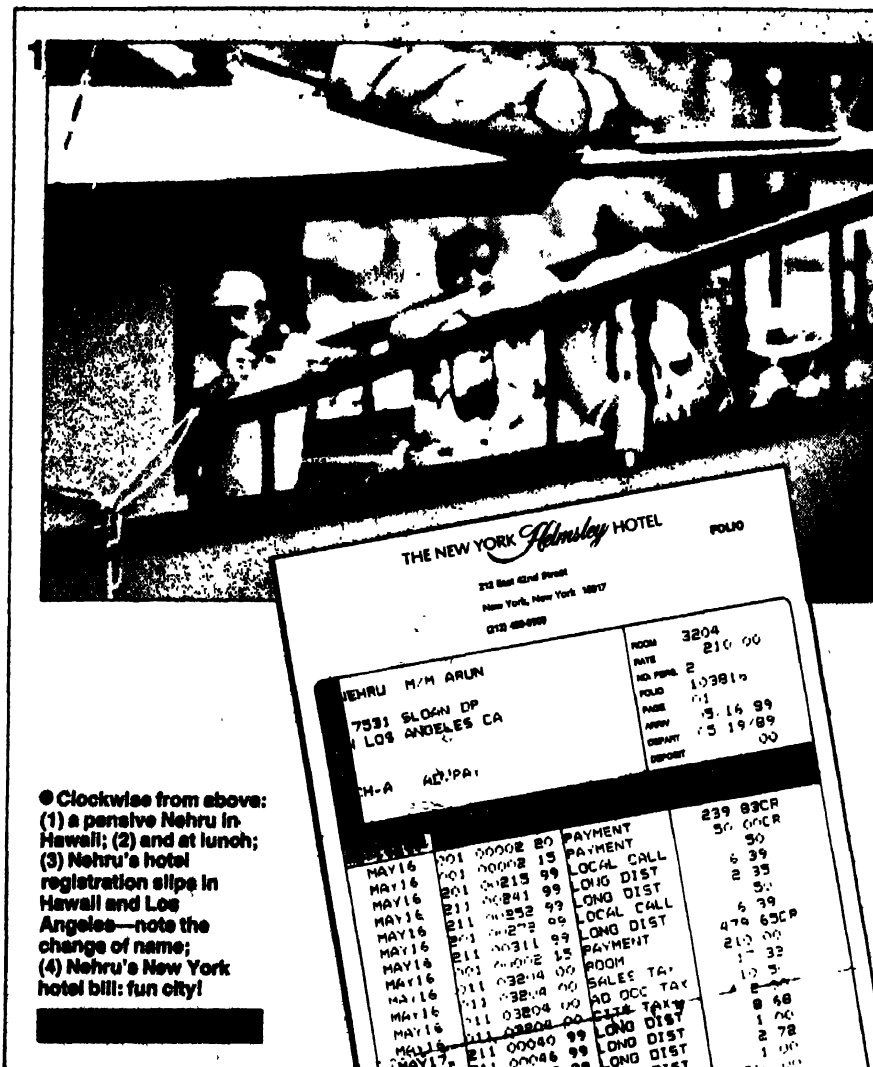
It is not my intention to suggest that Chana is handling somebody else's money abroad. Nor do I wish to allege that Chana's links with Nehru are of a commercial nature. That would be unfair—to Chana, and perhaps, to Nehru. But it does make you wonder, doesn't it?

Mr and Mrs Nehru then took off for New York. They got there on 16 May and proceeded to check into the upscale New York Helmsley Hotel. The room, with taxes, cost Nehru \$240 (a little under Rs 4,000). Presumably because the hotel was worried about the Janata Dal heavyweight's credit rating (little did they know....), they insisted on an advance payment of \$239.83 (exactly equivalent to the cost of one room night). This was handed over and Nehru added another deposit of \$50.

Later in the day, he seems to have decided to stay on longer and paid up a further \$479.65. That made it a deposit of \$768 (around Rs 11,000) in just one day. As it turned out, Nehru stayed just two nights and spent (on room and telephones alone) nearly \$620 (a little under Rs 10,000). Add meals, taxes etc. and you have some idea of the style in which the man of the people maintained himself.

And, of course, I'm not going to tackle the details of Mr Nehru's shopping at this stage. All I will say is that clearly he prefers Tiffany's to J.C. Penney! I'm sorry if this sound enigmatic, but Arun Nehru will know what I am talking about.

Nehru then went to London where he seems to have stayed in a flat—which was probably wise as that city is crawl-



• Clockwise from above:
(1) a pensive Nehru in Hawaii; (2) and at lunch;
(3) Nehru's hotel registration slips in Hawaii and Los Angeles—note the change of name;
(4) Nehru's New York hotel bill: fun city!

ing with Indians in May and June, and a hotel might have seemed a little too brazen.

But on 7 June, Nehru slipped back into the US—as quietly as he could. Why do you suppose he did that? The reason was simple enough: he went to meet Michael Hershman, the small-time detective who has tried to hold the Indian people to ransom. And what did Nehru find from Hershman? No doubt, he will soon tell us.

Nobody in his right mind would deny that Arun Nehru has every right to holiday abroad. After all, the poor man is a heart patient and needs some rest and recreation. Moreover, the strain of seeing the Janata Dal marginalise him must have been too much for his tender psyche.

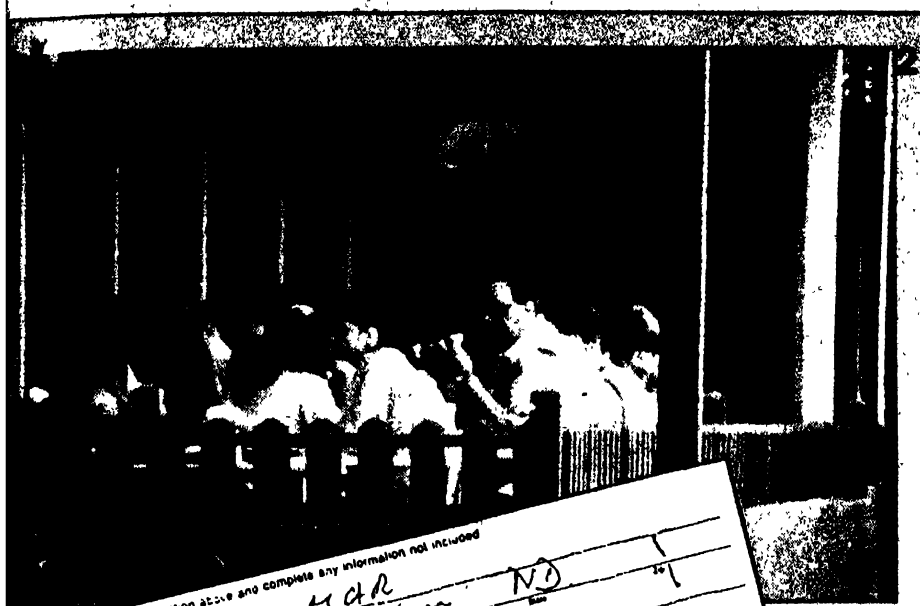
So why, then, should the rest of us, concern ourselves with this unfortunate has-been's foreign jaunt?

Here's why: Nehru has spent much of the last year using gossip and innuendo

to smear Rajiv Gandhi. He has suggested that Rajiv knows something about the Bofors kickbacks. And he has even sunk to the level of claiming that Sonia Gandhi and her relatives are profiting from India. In other words, the old 'stashing the nation's wealth abroad' routine.

Nor has he missed any opportunity to ask questions about the lifestyles of his enemies. He sneers about Satish Sharma's so-called import of marble tiles, and repeatedly draws attention to Ajitabh Bachchan's "property in Switzerland". His intention is simple: portray Rajiv and his friends as carpet-baggers with lavish lifestyles and wealth abroad.

There is already something ludicrous about this attitude when it emanates from a feudal chieftain who urges retainers to call him "Rajasaab". But when a well-fed paint peddler, whose chief contribution to Indian politics has been money management starts to get self-righteous, then it is time to reach for the sick bag.



Please verify the information above and complete any information not included

Name: ARUN NEHRU NO 1

Address: 311 McLean

Company / Convention:

Method of Payment: ☒ Cash / Check ☐ American Express ☐ VISA ☐ Carte Blanche ☐ Other

Safety Deposit Box:

Guest Signatures:

ANCESTRAL PERCENTAGE:

ROOM: 100

QUEST REGISTRATION

Name: Mr NEHRU

Address: 92 Sankar Laloo Drive

Company / Group:

Method of Payment: ☐ Cash/Check ☐ American Express ☐ Carte Blanche/Diners

Room: 1175

Rate: 235.00

Signature:

Stamp: WESTIN CENTURY

My contention is not that Nehru has committed a serious breach of morality by living well. The point is that he is a hypocrite—he points fingers at others for doing what he enjoys himself.

And then, of course, there's the legal issue. Some questions do present themselves.

- How did Nehru finance his holiday? To the best of my knowledge, he does not come a very rich family. He drew an executive's salary at Jensen and Nicholson and now subsists on an MP's wages. So where did all this money come from?

- Even if Nehru tells that he scrimped and saved for most of his career, living on a diet of bread and water, to gather the money needed for this jaunt, there's still the foreign currency aspect. How did he get the foreign exchange needed? Did he take it from the Reserve Bank? I have my doubts.

- The only way out for Nehru is to claim that he was hosted by various rich people. God knows, this might even be true. (Well, theoretically, at any rate.)

But there are a few problems with the defence. Firstly, whenever it has been used before, Nehru has smirked the most. When Satish Sharma, quite earnestly, pointed out that the tiles were a gift from his father-in-law, Nehru

Under the provisions of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), any MP who accepts substantial hospitality abroad has to give advance notice to the government. Did Nehru give any such notice?

sneered. Likewise, when Ajitabh Bachchan explained that his Swiss collaborators had bought the flat he lived in, Nehru snorted in disbelief. So are we expected to believe him when he offers the same defence?

- There's a second problem. Why should anybody want to host the hectoring, brow-beating Nehru on a holiday? Who would want to spend thousands of dollars on this man? Ranjit Chana, perhaps? Well, maybe. But why? Will Nehru tell us what his links with Chana are? And his other moneyed hosts?

That should be most interesting.

- There is also a third and more serious problem. No doubt, Nehru has heard of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). Briefly put, this Act seeks to ensure that MPs do not end up taking money from abroad without anyone knowing. Under its provisions, any MP who accepts hospitality abroad—especially substantial hospitality—has to give advance notice to the government.

As far as I know, Nehru gave no such notice. And so, he has contravened the Act.

- Therefore, it is possible to argue that there is a case for investigation under FCRA, FERA and the Income Tax Act. And frankly, it doesn't look too good for Nehru.

In a few months, this country will go to the polls. The Opposition will make a fetish of corruption. V.P. Singh will be projected as Mr Clean. He will tell us, yet again, how he quit the government because he was a man of integrity. (And the rest of us will be too tired to remind him that he was issuing certificates to Rajiv three months after he quit.) The same stories will be dragged out—marble tiles, Swiss flats, Italian connections etc. No proof will be offered but rumour and innuendo will be used to smear the Congress.

At this time, while the Opposition talks about moral regeneration and high standards of decency in public life, will Arun Nehru sit on the same platform as the rest? Will men like R.K. Hegde and Chandra Shekhar turn a blind eye to the many shortcomings in his record? And won't V.P. Singh be embarrassed at making common cause with Nehru?

These are not questions that I can answer: the Opposition must do that. And it must try and convince the people of India that does not distinguish between friends and opponents when it comes to corruption.

As for Arun Nehru, I am sorry to be the bearer of bad news when he is already down and out. But then, those who live by innuendo must be fought by investigation. ■



■
Once a power to reckon with, he is now isolated within the Janata Dal.

INDEPTH

The decline and fall of Arun Nehru

There was a certain poignancy to the scene. On 26 June, Opposition parties demonstrated against Doordarshan. In Delhi, such leaders as Ajit Singh and V. P. Singh courted arrest. Before that, they addressed a large crowd. Many Janata Dal heavyweights spoke. So did such second-line leaders as Ram Bilas Paswan and Naresh Pratap Chaudhury. Arun Nehru was present but was not allowed to have his say. And later, was not asked to join V.P. Singh, Ajit Singh and other leaders in the bus that took them to Mandir Marg police station. He came separately and hung around on his own. Only Menaka Gandhi, the widow of his late cousin, whose kindness in suggesting that Nehru become the Congress(I) candidate for Rae Bareilly, he had repaid with persecution, bothered to acknowledge Nehru's presence. Otherwise he was alone, a brooding, hulking, isolated presence.

It is difficult to believe that only three years ago, this was India's second most powerful man. That, for all of 1987, Rajiv Gandhi and the rest of the government lived in fear that this Machiavellian heavyweight would engineer the defection of enough MP's to topple the regime. And that, even in 1988, he was the Opposition's Chanakya, a reputed mas-

ter strategist who plotted each move against the tottering Congress(I) ministry. These days, Nehru is just another MP. And, by the look of things, an MP who will be hard pressed to retain his Rae Bareilly seat at the next general election.

He does not hold any office within the Janata Dal. The party is frequently criticised for having appointed an 'airbus national office-bearers' committee—but despite the large numbers of politicians who were accommodated, Nehru could not find a seat. All he has is a token membership of the Parliamentary Board.

What accounted for the decline? The first half of the story is pretty obvious: Nehru's power derived from his proximity to the Gandhis and once Rajiv decided to withdraw his favour, he lost his clout. But the second half is more complicated. Even after he had fallen out with Gandhi, the Opposition welcomed him with open arms and treated him as a politician of substance. Vishwanath Pratap Singh had been mistreated by Nehru when he was UP chief minister, and recognised that the burly politician would be an embarrassment in any campaign against corruption. Yet, he made common cause with Arun Nehru,

appeared on platforms with him, and gave the world the impression that he was his chief backroom strategist. What did the likes of V.P. Singh see in Nehru after Rajiv dropped him? And why have they now decided that he has nothing to offer them?

The answer perhaps lies in the feverish atmosphere of the summer of 1987. Two and a half years after the Opposition had been decimated by the largest mandate in Indian history, it suddenly began to feel that, perhaps, it did have a chance, after all. Rajiv Gandhi, who had once seemed invincible, was now bogged down in a quicksand of corruption allegations, and it was possible that he would sink. Moreover, he was widely perceived as a political innocent who had



been guided to the top by the manipulative genius of Arun Nehru.

In this situation, Nehru became crucial. Firstly, he understood how Rajiv's mind worked and so, could anticipate his every reaction. Secondly, he knew the details of the Congress(I)'s financial affairs and so, could expose Rajiv on the Bofors and HDW scandals. And finally, it was Nehru who had handed out tickets for the 1984 election. This meant that large numbers of Congress(I) MP's were personally loyal to him and would at some pre-arranged signal, cross the floor and topple the government. In a sense, therefore, Arun Nehru held the

Nehru at the anti-Doordarshan protest: only Menaka Gandhi would pay him any attention



Despite the hostility of the other Janata Dal leaders, Nehru's real isolation stems from the fact that V.P. Singh has started to disregard his advice



fuse to the explosion that was certain to bring down Gandhi.

As we now know, there was no explosion, and the Opposition began to wonder if Nehru really had the fuse in the first place. During the dismissal crisis of 1987, he maintained an enigmatic silence, and now says that he had made it clear to Zail Singh that he would not be party to a constitutional coup. (Rajiv says he tried to be part of the coup but got nowhere.)

When the Congress(I) expelled him, along with Arif Mohammed and V.C. Shukla, Nehru's supporters hoped that this would lead to a popular upsurge and that several MPs would resign along with him. After this hope was extinguished, Nehru's only value lay in his allegedly superlative grasp of political manipulation and in his knowledge of Rajiv's financial dealings. It says something about Nehru's confidence that he—a politician with no base—was able to parley these assets into a position as one of the leaders of the national Opposition.

The image as a master manipulator took a year to fade. Nehru had been expected to advise the Opposition on how to destabilise Congress(I) governments (after all hadn't he destabilised NTR and Farooq Abdullah for Mrs Gandhi?), and to spot chinks in Rajiv's armour. As it turned out, he was unable to do either. His inadequacies became painfully clear during V.P. Singh's campaign in Allahabad. Not only was he unable to contribute to the Raja's strategy but his protege Arif Mohammed Khan also robbed the victory of much of its lustre by going into a very public sulk. Unable to choose between V.P. Singh and Arif, Nehru withdrew from the controversy.

Since then, Nehru has been able to offer the Opposition only one thing: the details of Rajiv's financial fiddles. Almost from the time he joined the Opposition he has been giving interviews saying that he knows all about the HDW kickbacks, has the goods on Ottavio Quattrochi and Snamprogetti, and can identify the Bofors agents. Tantalisingly, he draws back just as he seems on the verge of spilling the beans. Most Opposition politicians are certain that Rajiv can be embarrassed by evidence of financial impropriety, so Nehru's claim that he knows where the bodies are buried has been taken seriously.

It would be unfair to say that everybody now feels that Nehru knows nothing—many people are still convinced that he has the information. But, Nehru

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ARUN NEHRU

25 May, 1944

- Born in Lucknow. Is cousin of Rajiv Gandhi. The two do not grow up together.

March 1979

- Becomes president of Jenson and Nicholson, a Calcutta paint company, capping an astonishing rise within its ranks.



With Mrs Gandhi: nephew

25 February, 1980

- Asked to contest Rae Bareli seat vacated by Indira Gandhi. She feels that voters want a Nehru. Menaka Gandhi suggests his name. Sanjay agrees and takes to calling Nehru "Rangwallah".

1982

- Emerges as Rajiv's political aide and helps organise the Asiad (thus earning the nickname "Appu").

1983-84

- Fights with R. K. Dhawan and performs such pleasant tasks for Mrs Gandhi as toppling Farooq Abdullah and looking after UP.

November 1984

- After Rajiv becomes Prime Minister, he takes his place as Congress(I) general secretary. Hands out tickets for the forthcoming election.

31 December, 1984

- Made minister of state for power. This low-key appointment leads to rumours that he is out of favour. But he continues to run the party.

September 1985

- Appointed minister of state for home in charge of internal security. Called India's second most powerful man.



With Rajiv: hatred runs deep

February 1986

- Has disagreements with Rajiv. Nehru says he offered to resign. Rajiv says he did not. Stories that he is plotting to topple his cousin and take his place begin to do the rounds.

26 May, 1986

- Has heart attack in Srinagar. Is effectively grounded. Rajiv does not fly to see him and, soon, hands his internal security responsibilities over to P. Chidambaram.

September 1986

- Shouts at Chidambaram who is remarkably unfazed. At this, Nehru complains to Rajiv, who advises a period of rest. Nehru now says he resigned again. Rajiv denies this. At any rate, Nehru continues in the ministry.

22 October, 1986

- Is unceremoniously dropped in a Cabinet reshuffle. His *chamchas* say he will be given "party responsibilities". He is not.

January 1987

- Makes up with V.P.

With the Raja: enemies turned friends



has been bewilderingly silent. He has not revealed one secret bank account number and has steadfastly refused to substantiate his allegations about Snam-progetti. In fact, when V.P. Singh tried to re-open the Bofors issue last year, he had to turn to an old issue of *The Hindu* because Nehru would provide no dope.

All Nehru can be said to have done is embarrassed Rajiv over the Thakkar Commission report (if indeed he did leak it—he still denies having done so) But even in that case, the suggestion, assiduously spread by Nehru and Arif that the full report would implicate Sonia Gandhi, turned out to be groundless.

Now, Nehru's acolytes whisper that the heavyweight's long trip abroad (the subject of Udayan Sharma's column elsewhere in this issue) was part of the process of digging up dirt on Rajiv, and that Nehru has returned with dynamite which will rock the country in the run-up to the elections.

Most Opposition leaders are sceptical about Nehru's ability to embarrass Rajiv and leery of claims that he has returned from abroad with dirt on the regime.

Nehru understood how Rajiv's mind worked and could anticipate his every reaction. Also, he knew the details of the Congress(I)'s financial affairs and could expose Gandhi on the Bofors scandal



(Though, if he has then, this will elevate his prospects.) They have heard this refrain so often that Nehru's credibility has worn thin.

The general view in Opposition circles now is that Nehru is a liability. Says Janata Dal leader Harikesh Bahadur: "What is Arun Nehru in Opposition politics? He is nothing. He has not played any role." Agrees Sudhindra Bha-dauriya, a Chandra Shekhar lieutenant: "Arun Nehru is not my leader. He is a party worker, that's all. I can never accept Arun Nehru as my leader."

Off the record, others are more direct. Devi Lal, for instance, makes no secret of his view that it is foolish to project Nehru as a Janata Dal leader because, when he loses his deposit in Rae Bareli, it will reflect on the party. Chandra Shekhar and Ajit Singh regard him as a nuisance and several party workers have warned V.P. Singh of the embarrassment caused by Nehru's presence on the same platform. Last year, Ram Poojan Patel, MP, told the Raja, "The moment you talk about corruption, everybody laughs because the *gangotri*

Singh, who is an old antagonist. Rajiv takes note.

May 1987

- After V.P. Singh leaves the government, he and Nehru become best buddies and there is talk of them encouraging Zail Singh to dismiss Rajiv. Both deny this.

15 July, 1987

- With the presidential election out of the way, Rajiv expels Nehru, Arif Mohammad Khan and V.C. Shukla from the Congress(I). V.P. Singh writes a letter of protest. He is told to leave the party too.



Founding the Jan Morcha: *eminence grise*

2 October, 1987

- V.P. Singh, Nehru and assorted cohorts form the Jan Morcha, which, they say, is not a political party.

he is not a factor in the new power equations.

The Janata Dal: Arun who?

6 August, 1988

- Jan Morcha becomes part of the National Front. The alliance with the national Opposition begins the process of marginalising Nehru. Few Opposition leaders can stand him.

11 October, 1988

- The Janata Dal is formed. This completes the isolation of Nehru as



(source) of corruption stands behind you on the dais."

Nehru has come to terms with this hostility. He has got accustomed to the idea that only Arif and V.C. Shukla will stand up for him and has tried to do the same for them. When Shukla was man-handled in Bhopal, by Devi Lal's men, Nehru protested on his behalf.

Despite the hostility of others, Nehru's real isolation stems from the fact that V.P. Singh has begun to disregard his advice. There are several instances of this. Among the few politicians close to Nehru is Bhoothar Narain Singh. V.P. Singh is deliberately projecting Veerendra Nath Dixit against B.N. Singh over Nehru's objections. Even in Rae Bareilly, Nehru's own constituency, the Raja has appointed Ashok Singh general secretary of All India Yuva Janata Dal over Nehru's own candidate. And though both Nehru and Arif made the appointment of Wasim Ahmed as secretary of the Janata Dal a prestige issue, V.P. Singh chose Irfanullah, an Ajit Singh protege.

Nehru has been bewilderingly silent. He has not revealed one secret bank account number and has steadfastly refused to substantiate his allegations about Snamprogetti



Notes Ram Dhan, the president of the Jan Morcha: "I had told Arun Nehru not to go to the Janata Dal because I knew that people would humiliate him." V.P. Singh, who has been a party to this process, is apprehensive that the Congress will puncture his anti-corruption balloon, by confronting him with Arun Nehru's example—thus, it is in his interests, to distance Nehru, too.

Nehru is sensitive to charges that his record is particularly unsavoury. He is incensed by questions about how he financed his foreign trips and says: "I had gone there on holiday to meet my daughter and son-in-law. Whenever I get time, I will go there again. I know R.K. Dhanwan and Lalit Suri are spreading all kinds of rumours. It shows the level to which they have sunk."

Such bluster is typical of Nehru. And perhaps it will help him ride out the storm over his around-the-world jaunt. But it will not alter one basic fact—unless he can prove to the Opposition that he has something concrete to offer, his decline will continue.

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

The Rajiv show

Doordarshan and AIR have become Congress(I) propaganda machines

For a brief while it seemed that the Rajiv Gandhi regime was interested in fair play. Those were the days when Bhaskar Ghosh and Gopi Krishna Arora revolutionised the news coverage of Doordarshan with balanced reporting and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi pulled up the then information and broadcasting minister, V.N. Gadgil, for focussing the television cameras too often on him. Fairfax, Bofors and other such controversial issues were discussed threadbare on the small screen and even the views of prominent critics of the government were telecast fearlessly. The government-controlled media—Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR)—became less and less of what the Opposition had alleged all along—a tool in the hands of the ruling party to influence public opinion.

But the *glasnost* in the state-controlled media was over all too soon. Gadgil, Ghosh and Arora have been replaced by a new set of government media planners. And, with the elections round the corner, a nervous Congress(I) has decided to requisition the services of the faithful Doordarshan and AIR to sell the theory that there is no alternative for the Congress(I) and discredit the Opposition.

No wonder, an angry V.P. Singh has dubbed Doordarshan as "Dushtdarshan" and Opposition parties belonging to the National Front along with the two communist parties staged a nationwide protest on 26 June against the misuse of government-controlled media. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), too, observed 25 June as "Switch Off Rajiv Serial Day" and broke dummy television sets as a symbolic gesture.

The induction of K.K. Tewari into the I&B ministry gave a clear indication that Rajiv Gandhi was no longer interested in infusing professionalism, sophistication and a semblance of objectivity in Doordarshan's news coverage. On the other hand, the move indicated that the Congress(I) had decided to use the electronic media for partisan ends. And, Tewari, well-known for his brashness and lack of restraint in attacking adversaries, was the ideal choice to realise this aim.

Once Tewari took over the reins of the broadcasting ministry, he went ab-



Ajit Singh courting arrest along with his supporters: protesting against biased reporting

out his task in a most brazen fashion. Following the minister's instructions, both AIR and Doordarshan made an ingenious use of an article written by veteran socialist leader Madhu Limaye on the problems facing the Janata Dal to humiliate the Opposition. In the piece, published on 28 May in the *Sunday Mail*, Limaye had critically analysed the weaknesses of the Janata Dal and its leaders and had advised Chandra Shekhar and V.P. Singh to close ranks to defeat the Congress(I) in the forthcoming elections. Limaye concluded by saying that while the two Thakur leaders were busy fighting with each other like Prithviraj and Jaichand, Mohammad Ghori was waiting in the wings to finish them off.

Perhaps for the first time in their history, AIR and Doordarshan made a news item out of a newspaper article,

and that too, written by an Opposition leader, and used it in all the news bulletins for two days. But while all the critical comments made by Limaye about V.P. Singh were given prominent coverage, whatever had been said against the government was scrupulously edited. An impression was created to suggest that even a veteran Opposition leader like Madhu Limaye was disillusioned with the Janata Dal and its leaders.

Limaye was understandably piqued at this blatant distortion and on 2 June, he shot off an angry letter to Rajiv Gandhi protesting against both AIR and Doordarshan. Wrote Limaye: "Akashvani and Doordarshan have committed a sin against media morality and intellectual ethics. I feel sad that AIR and TV have taken final leave of fairness, objec-

■ tivity and truth. It is a pity that your ministers and officials believe that these things can help the ruling party win the forthcoming elections to the Lok Sabha."

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) reportedly passed on the letter to K.K. Tewari, who shot off a reply to Limaye



on 10 June. Tewari praised Limaye for his "significant, candid and non-partisan" views. Little realising that the weekly newspaper that had published Limaye's article did not enjoy a wide circulation, he also added that the socialist leader's write-up had been read "throughout the country with avid interest". The minister informed Limaye: "Your incisive analysis and well-argued expose of the new outfit becomes interesting and newsworthy because nobody ever questions your bonafides on your ancient and age-old anti-Congressism." But what about Limaye's views on the Rajiv Gandhi government which the Doordarshan and AIR bulletins had conveniently ignored?

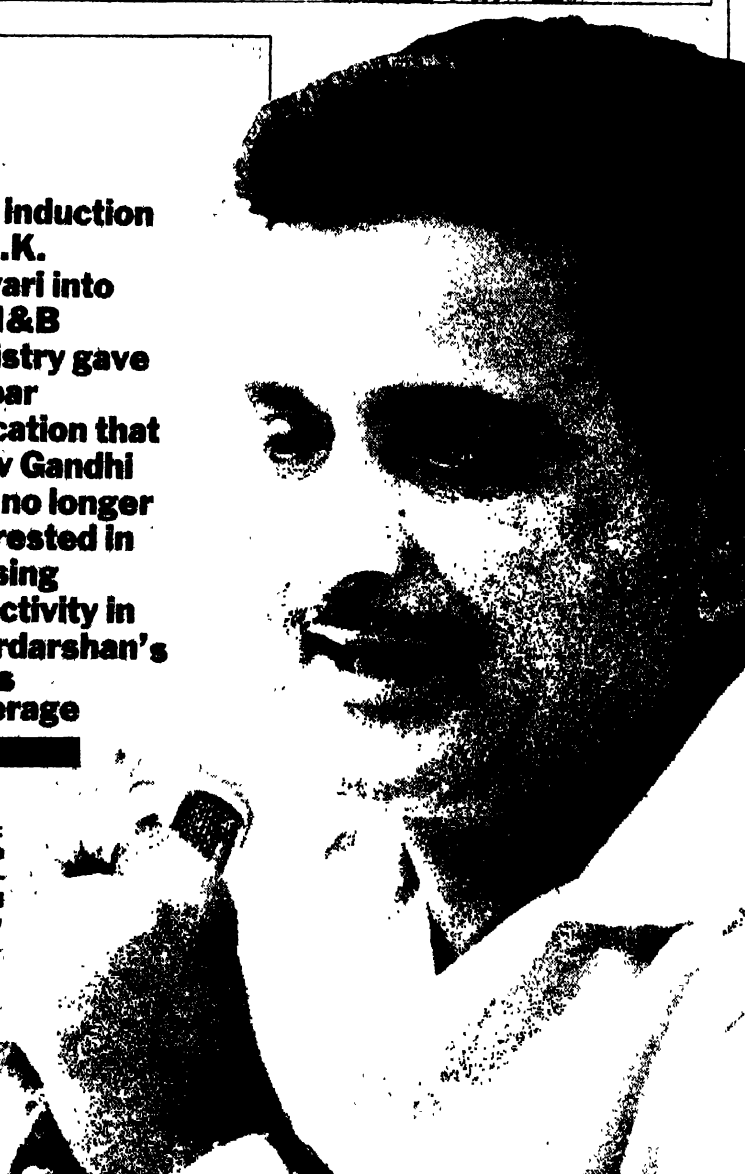
Tewari obviously dealt with this aspect too. He wrote to Limaye: "In all humility I may submit that your views on the Rajiv Gandhi government are all too

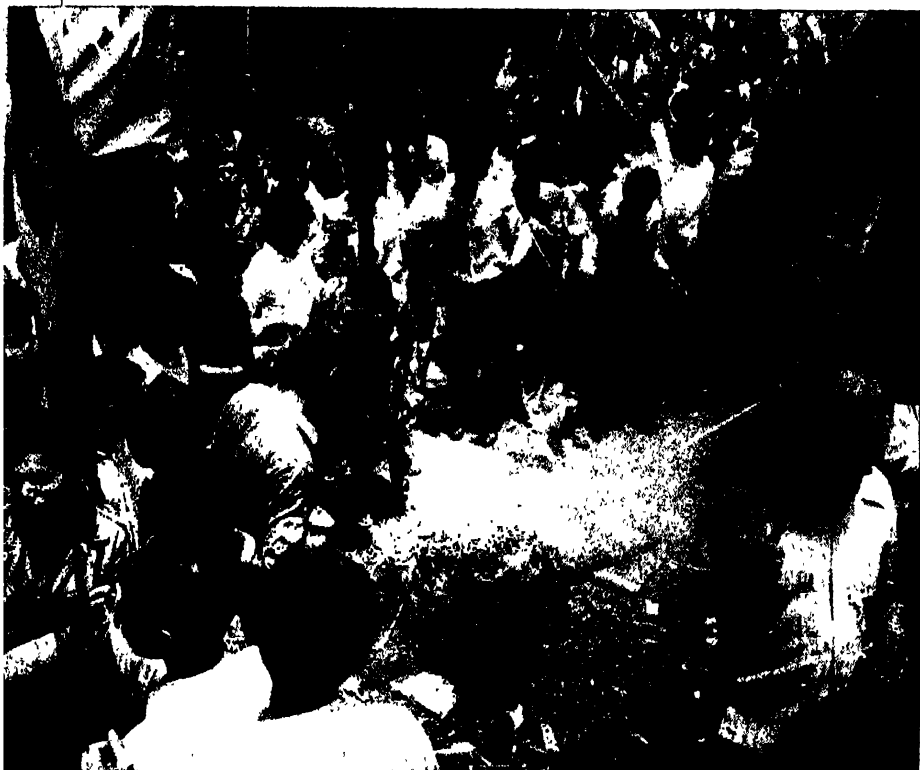


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The induction of K.K. Tewari into the I&B ministry gave a clear indication that Rajiv Gandhi was no longer interested in infusing objectivity in Doordarshan's news coverage

K.K. Tewari:
influencing the
government-
controlled
media

JAGDISHYADAV





Janata Dal workers burn television sets in Delhi: mobilising public opinion

NITIN RAI

familiar to be really 'news'. Because of their reiteration *ad nauseum*, they have become almost tautological. I am sure by now you must also be feeling sick and tired of having to repeat the same views with such mechanical consistency. Additionally, you may also not be oblivious of the boredom and fatigue caused to the discriminating public."

Stung by this ridicule, Limaye sent another letter to Rajiv Gandhi on 14 June in which he wrote: "K.K. Tewari's answer is as impudent in tone as it is irrelevant in content. The simple question that I raised was about fair reporting. Tewari has nothing to say about it. He claims that my views on the Rajiv government are too familiar to be really news. He accuses me of repeating these views with mechanical consistency. He further informs me that the public is suffering from boredom and fatigue as a result of the reiteration of my views *ad nauseum*."

Limaye went on to raise a few more questions. He asked Rajiv Gandhi: "How many times have Doordarshan and AIR carried my views on the various issues that have arisen since you assumed power? How many news items were sourced to my articles on various issues and broadcast over the AIR and Doordarshan? It is sickening that your minister should indulge in misleading statements and false suggestions. What boredom and what nausea is he talking about? May I say it is the blatant

Congress propaganda that is causing nausea and boredom to the discriminating public."

Tewari, however, remains unfazed in the face of the controversy. The electronic media is being openly used for promoting the ruling party's interests. Programmes on Jawaharlal Nehru, Kamla Nehru and Indira Gandhi have become the standard fare of Doordarshan. The government's achievements are trum-

Veteran socialist leader Madhu Limaye was piqued at the blatant distortion of his article by Doordarshan and AIR to serve the interests of the Congress(I)



peted about in programmes on Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and Panchayati Raj. All that is being reported about the Opposition is its negative aspects. And, as far as promoting the image of Rajiv Gandhi is concerned, Tewari has already made it clear that whatever the Prime Minister says and does makes news. Argues Tewari: "When the newspapers carry reports with pictures of Prime Minister's programmes on their front pages, nobody accuses them of promoting Rajiv Gandhi. But if Doordarshan does the same, everybody pounces on us. This is not fair."

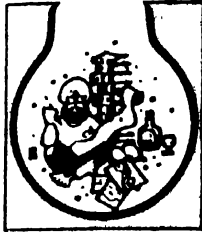
L.K. Advani, the BJP president, has been monitoring the government's media strategy. According to him, an analysis of Doordarshan's English news bulletins telecast at 9.30 pm everyday shows that in the month of May this year, on at least 25 days out of the maximum 31, the newscast began with Rajiv Gandhi's statements. In May, as many as 800 lines were hogged by Rajiv Gandhi, 180 by Union home minister Buta Singh and 90 by Union I&B minister H.K.L. Bhagat. Advani points out that the maximum total coverage received by any single Opposition leader was 37 lines and this favourite of Doordarshan was significantly Subramaniam Swamy.

In an election year, the role of the government-controlled media is going to be crucial because of its reach and the Opposition is determined to make it a poll issue. The Janata Dal, for instance, has pledged to accord both AIR and Doordarshan autonomy if it comes to power. The massive nationwide protests by all the Opposition parties on 25 and 26 June have proved that they can mobilise public opinion against the government on this important issue.

The government, on the other hand, is eager to expand the transmission network of Doordarshan as soon as possible. Its ambitious plans, however, have received a temporary setback due to the failure of INSAT-1D. At the moment, INSAT-1B is serving the purpose but the life of the satellite will end most probably by October, the most crucial time from the point of view of elections. A chief engineer of Doordarshan, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that hectic parleys are going on within the I&B ministry and Doordarshan to evolve a strategy to cope with the challenge. Alternative arrangements will be made if necessary to keep the existing transmission time and the area covered at its present level. However, it is not yet clear what specific measures will be adopted in this regard.

Kuldeep Kumar/New Delhi

Bachchan on Bacchus



In the West, the tavern is the "local" or the "pub" where you go for a pint of mild or bitters, talk to old cronies, play shove-ha'penny or, if on a pub-crawl, simply get drunk. It has not become a literary symbol as it has in the Orient where it stands in opposition to the mosque and the *mandir*. For the Oriental, the *maiqada* is a place from where you can mock the sanctimonious *Shaikh*, *Zahid*, *Waiz*, *Naseh* and indulge in your whims and fancies. In the West the tavern-keeper is a mere licensee, the plump barmaid someone you can flirt with, the liquor served only meant to get you in high spirits. In the Orient, the *maikhana*, *maiqada* or the *madhushala* are havens of retreat from worldly pursuits, its owner is a deity (Bacchus) and the wine-server, the *Saki*, the elusive sweetheart of your fantasies. Oriental poets have dried up more

inkwells praising the daughter of the grape than they have emptying tankards full of *soma*. Praises of *soma* were sung by Sanskrit and Hindi poets. Bachchan's inheritance is both Hindi and Urdu. He became the high priest of the *madhushala*.

I do not know very much about Harivansh Rai Bachchan besides the fact that he married a Sardar and sired two sons, one of whom, Amitabh, is hero number one of Hindi films. The one and only time I met him was at a British Council reception given in his honour for having translated some of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets into Hindi. I had heard a lot about his *Madhushala*, first published in 1935. It had been an instant success. Common people memorised its lines and sang them. Apart from telling upholders of morality to go to hell, they

were written in simple Hindi spoken by the man in the street. And mellifluous.

According to the poet, Ali Sardar Jafri, the tavern as a citadel of defiance against orthodoxy is of Persian origin. When Islam conquered Persia, the Iranians wreaked vengeance by imposing their hedonistic culture on the Islamic world. This is evident from the tomes of poetry written in Persian followed by Urdu in praise of wine (forbidden by the Quran) and the wine-server as well as lauding the tavern at the expense of the *haram* (Mecca). There is more blasphemy in Persian and Urdu poetry than in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. The sharp line drawn which Rushdie crossed was that while you could mock Allah, and the House of God (Kaaba), you could not say a word against Prophet Mohammed: *Ba khuda diwana bashad, ba Mohammed hoshial*!

Most of Bachchan's 135 poems in *Madhushala* will sound familiar to those who have read Fitzgerald's translations of the *rubaiyats* of Omar Khayyam. And for every line he has written, one can

find parallels in Persian and Urdu poetry. But he is not a plagiarist. Far from it. His imagery remains basically Hindu. To wit:

**I had heard a lot about
Harivansh Rai
Bachchan's *Madhushala*,
first published in 1935.
It had been an instant
success. Common
people memorised its
lines and sang them**



TAPAN DAS

Bonfires of Holi once a year
Are lit, and once the Feast of Light
Encourages the gambler's throw
—Beyond compare my House's
might!

O worldlings stop one day to ponder,
And toward the House of Wine just
wander,

For we keep Holi every day
And keep Diwali every night.

Contempt for places of worship is as
clearly spelt out:

The mosque rebuked my drunken
ways;

The Hindu temple did the same;
They saw the goblet in my hand
So all they had for me was shame;
Where I, an exiled infidel
Had rested then, I cannot tell;
Only the House of Wine received
My weary spirit with no blame.

You find the same sentiment expressed in Urdu verse:

*Nigah-e-Zahid hai soo-e-Kaaba
Rukh apna hai maikadeh ke jaanib
Voh apney eemaan ko deykhta hai
Ham apney eeman ko deykhtey hain*
(The holy man turns his gaze towards
Mecca

My eyes towards the tavern incline;
He looks after his faith
I look after mine.)

The rejection of the mosque and the
mandir is explicit in the following lines:

*Sheikh kee masjid bhee deykhee
Brahman ka dayaar bhee
Rind nay kuchch soch kar
Aabaad maikhana kiya*

(The Muslim mosque did I frequent
The Brahmin's temple did I see,
I pondered over both sometime, and
Concluded, it was the tavern for me.)

Bachchan's faith in the immortality of
the drinking den is touching:

Great houses fail for
heirs, until

None of their name is left
to moan;

Palaces where the hand-
maid danced
Stand joyless, hollow and
alone;

Kingdoms collapse in
anarchy

And kings may lose their
destiny;

But men will always
drink, and thus

My House is never over-
thrown. ■

It was the **FIRST** to catch
It was the **FIRST** to give away
African offer to Indian cricketers
while he was on the attack. It was
the Indian tennis establishment

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the game on the latest South
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the **FIRST** to net Vijay footfaulting



New Look

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Ballot versus bullet

Will the recently-concluded elections to the three autonomous hill councils in Bangladesh bring peace to the troubled Chittagong Hill Tracts?

Very little was at stake yet the President of Bangladesh, H.M. Ershad, made it a prestige issue. The results of the election to the three newly created autonomous hill councils in Bangladesh's troubled Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) would in no way alter the power equations in the country; what the polls would test was whether the political will of the government in Dhaka was stronger than the resilience of the 2,000-odd tribal insurgents who had been fighting for more power and autonomy since the last 17 years. Thus, when Ershad declared that the elections would be held in the CHT on 25 June, many had expressed the fear that it would be a bloody one as the extremist Shanti Bahini had given a call to boycott the polls.

The 8,000 square kilometres of the Chittagong Hill Tracts had been virtually out of bounds for foreigners ever since Shanti Bahini, the frontal organisation of the militant tribals, gave a call for regional autonomy in 1972. The insurgents belonged mostly to the Chakma tribe—Buddhists who had come from Burma to live in the valleys of Chittagong three centuries ago. As the campaign of the Shanti Bahini against successive regimes in Bangladesh and against the non-tribal Muslim settlers became violent, no one dared to enter the area. In fact, vast tracts of the beautiful valleys in the three districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban

are under the control of the Bangladesh army. Rarely did anyone venture out after sunset in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The government, however, decided that it would invite the foreign press to oversee the elections in the hill district and tell the world about its sincere efforts to break the back of the insurgency movement. Arrangements had been made for foreign media-persons to cover the polls and diplomats who had put in requests to visit the hill tracts were also allowed to be present as observers. Major General Abdus Salam, the general officer commanding (GOC) of the Chittagong division, who held a series of negotiations with the rebels in the past, said: "Today, the issues facing Chittagong might be debated but the election is not. The laws of the country can be criticised but they cannot be disobeyed."

Journalists, mostly those from the Western media, did not expect that the polling in CHT would be spontaneous and peaceful. But they were surprised by the efficiency of the army which stagemanaged the whole show. Candi-

Journalists, mostly those from the Western media, did not expect that the polling in the Chittagong Hill Tracts would be spontaneous and peaceful. But they were surprised by the efficiency of the army which stage-managed the whole show

dates and voters were made to queue up outside the polling booths visited by the journalists. Just as the Bangladesh Air Force helicopters carrying the press landed near a polling station, the crowds began clapping and cheering. Several of the candidates who were contesting for the 30 *upazila* seats were former Shanti Bahini guerrillas. Most of them gave well-rehearsed answers when ques-





tioned by journalists. They said they had deserted the ranks of the insurgents because for the first time a government in Bangladesh was attempting a political solution to their problem. Ravindralal Chakma, who was elected from the Belaichari sub-district in Rangamati, said: "I had joined the Shanti Bahini in 1973 because I was disillusioned with Sheikh Mujib's government. I was in charge of several operations near the border but I resigned from the Shanti Bahini because they began to impose the fear of God in the minds of the tribals. Today the rebels have little support among the people."

In every polling station, the scene was the same, the stories repetitive. The army had ensured that there was a good

turnout of voters at the booths which the journalists were visiting. Inside the booths illiterate tribal men and women were being told what to do. It was a laborious process because the *upazila* seats had been divided according to the population of the 13 tribes living in a particular sub-district. Two thirds of the seats had been reserved for the tribals and the rest for the non-tribals.

That the people were voting under

duress was evident after a visit to the Naniarchar polling station in the Chakma-dominated Rangamati district. Ever since the elections were announced on 24 April, the Shanti Bahini stepped up efforts to disrupt peace in the valley. Over 50 people had been killed in the two months before the polls. Even on the eve of the elections, Bahini guerrillas held 300 tribal families at gun-point so that they would not be able to turn up for voting. An entire village of the Marma tribe in Khagarachari district was set aflame the same night.

Despite such coercive tactics, a sizable number of the 20,000 people of Naniarchar responded to the army's call and turned out at the polling booth. The school building where the booth was located was decorated with paper flags and buntings. Among the contesting candidates who were asked to speak to the journalists was Pranab Kumar De-

wan, who explained how insurgency struck roots in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Chakmas, Dewan said, came to the forefront of the struggle since they were the most educated among the tribes of the hill tracts. Also, after the formation of Pakistan, the leadership of the tribals had come from within the ranks of the Chakmas. In 1971, Manobendra Narayan Larma, a Chakma Member of Parliament with a Marxist background, formed the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sahanghati Samiti (JSS). The following year he floated the Shanti Bahini, the armed wing of the JSS. Among the demands of the Shanti Bahini were provincial autonomy, withdrawal of army camps from the CHT,



(Left) A soldier keeps vigil outside a polling station; (above) voters flee from a polling booth following extremist violence: reign of terror

ousting the non-tribals from the area, formation of a tribal regiment in the Bangladesh army and the necessity of a law for prohibiting settlement of non-tribals in the hill tracts. Does the Shanti Bahini enjoy the support of the people? Pranab Kumar Dewan replied: "During the liberation war of 1971, the Chakma leaders lent support to the Pakistani forces. After Bangladesh was formed, all the leaders went underground. They were helped with arms and ammunition by India and the situation continues today."

Even as Dewan was briefing journalists, the hills around Naniarchar resounded with the sound of a loud explosion. It was followed by the sound of rapid gunfire—Bahini guerrillas were probably firing in the air to scare away voters. Immediately, army jawans took positions in the trenches which had been dug around the polling booth. Armed

policemen tried to restrain the voters from fleeing the election booth. But within minutes, everyone had deserted the place. The insurgents had succeeded in disrupting the polls, at least, in this small town.

Embarrassed army officials tried to assure the visitors that despite such provocations, the voters would return to

years of violence we have lost our culture and economy. It will take us more than 50 years to recover the losses of those 17 years," commented Samiran Dewan.

The non-tribal leaders view such pronouncements with scepticism. In 1947, when Pakistan was formed, tribals comprised 91 per cent of the population of the hill tracts. Today non-tribals account

for 41 per cent of the population of the area. Since the hill tracts were sparsely populated, successive Bangladesh governments encouraged people to settle down in the area, which was strongly resented by the tribals. Though most of the Muslim settlers worked as labourers and traders, a large number of them purchased land, causing a severe pressure on the economy of the hilly region, where only around 30 per cent of the land is cultivable. It is the conflict over land holdings between the Buddhist tribals and the non-tribals which is at the root of the Chittagong problem.

India has been monitoring the developments in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. New Delhi has often asked Dhaka to create conducive conditions in the hill tracts so that the refugees who have taken shelter in Tripura can return home. While India maintains that there are 58,000 tribal refugees in India—the last batch landing in Tripura as late as May this year—Dhaka places the number at only 29,000. Assured Major General Salam, "Whether the number of refugees is 30,000 or 60,000 they will all be eventually taken back."

While the army officials in Bangladesh are hesitant to talk about India's role in the CHT, local leaders squarely blamed New Delhi for supporting the Shanti Bahini. Shantimoy Chakma, a former Shanti Bahini activist, alleged that the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) was dealing directly with the central committee of the Shanti Bahini and was providing the guerrillas arms training. He claimed to have spent two years in one such training camp in Dehradun, where they were taught guerrilla and mountain warfare by officials of the Indian army. According to Shantimoy Chakma, the number of Shanti Bahini activists was dwindling because of the continuous leadership crisis the underground outfit was facing after the death of Larma in 1983. Moreover, the Congress(I)-led coalition government in Tripura had stopped supporting the rebels.

Though India's support to the Shanti Bahini has never been proved, the issue nevertheless remains an irritant in Indo-Bangladeshi relations. It now remains to be seen whether the recently-concluded local body elections will isolate the Shanti Bahini further from the people of the hill tracts. As Samiran Dewan said: "The GNLF in Darjeeling failed to get complete autonomy. They got only the district council. In Tripura, the TUJS did not get independence. What we have got following the elections is much more than what either of them got."

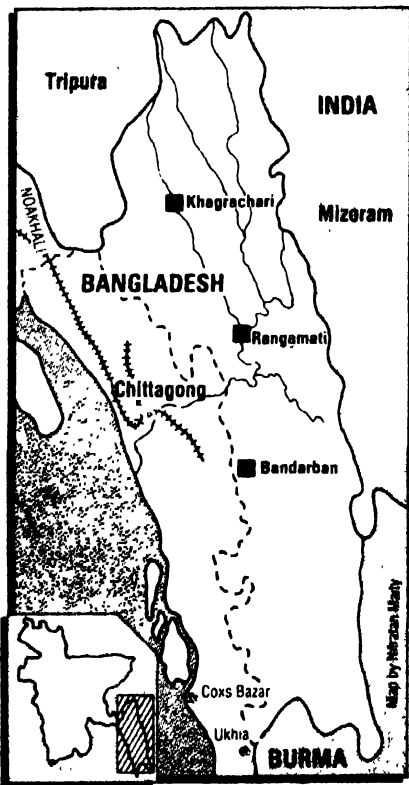
Ritu Sarin/Chittagong



The contesting candidates (foreground): will the Chakma problem be solved?

cast their franchise and that the turnout of voters in the three districts had been an impressive 40 per cent. That the elections could be held was in itself a major victory for the government, claimed Abdus Salam. The government in fact tried to persuade the Shanti Bahini to return to the democratic process; when it failed, Dhaka went ahead with the polls. Out of the total of 64 districts of Bangladesh, the chairmen of the three districts of the CHT were the first to be elected. The rest were nominated. It was now upto the elected members of the sub-districts to work out an administrative system comprising both tribals and the non-tribals.

Samiran Dewan, the Chakma leader who was elected unopposed as the chairman of the Khagarachari district and who is on the hit list of the Shanti Bahini, said that the first task of the elected leaders would be to ensure that all land transactions would now be done with authorisation from the district members. This would be the first step towards resolving the dispute between the tribals and the non-tribals, the root cause of insurgency in the area. "But it will be a long battle because in the 17



Communal conflicts



Exclusive platforms or Muslim conferences may defeat the very purpose of secularism

KULDIP NAYAR

A Muslim editor of an Urdu daily published from Bihar observed the other day: "I do not know what Shahabuddin has done for the Muslims, but he has at least united the Hindus, who had never been one for the last 500 years." The remark may not be absolutely true but there is no denying that Shahabuddin's statements are being used by Hindu chauvinists to justify their anti-Muslim bias.

What Shahabuddin is trying to do—draw attention to the plight of the Muslims—is unobjectionable but the methods he adopts not only spoil the cause he is fighting for but also make him appear to be a separatist. The call for the boycott of Republic Day functions was a wrong step because it unnecessarily instigated Hindu chauvinists to proclaim that nothing was sacrosanct for persons like Shahabuddin, not even Republic Day, which is observed by the entire nation, not by a particular community or a political party. Realising his mistake, he withdrew the call but it damaged his reputation. Some of the liberal Hindus noted the absurd limits to which some Muslim organisations could go.

By convening a Muslim convention in Delhi on 7 July, Shahabuddin has again put himself in the wrong. The complaints of Muslims, that they have practically no avenues of employment and are not getting proper opportunities in trade and business, are justified; there is also some truth in the charge that sometimes the authorities are not even-handed.

But a conference of Muslims alone to voice their protest or chalk out a counter-programme will only queer the pitch further. Hindu chauvinists will point out that the Muslims are getting together, and that old fears of Muslim solidarity and separatism will be revived. In fact, such conferences only serve to lend credibility to organisations like

the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal.

Already the legislation following the Shah Bano case on maintenance to a Muslim divorcee has affected the Hindu psyche, with the government accused of formulating a special law to override the common law of the land to "appease" the Muslims. The propaganda over the Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy has driven a wedge of suspicion between the two communities. Shahabuddin's call for the "liberation" of Babri Masjid may have struck a sensitive chord among some Muslims but has surely made a solution all the more difficult.

ON THE other hand, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and communal organisations are making matters worse by initiating a move to carry bricks from different parts of India to Ayodhya to build a new temple on the disputed site. As for the government, it has not referred the matter to a special court even after making a promise to that effect. This may lead to riots in various parts of the country.

Against this backdrop, how does a Muslim conference help? Presuming that Shahabuddin is able to project the type of "Muslim identity" he has in mind and there are unanimous resolutions passed in support of various demands, it does not mean that Hindu opinion will seek a compromise. The result may be otherwise. It may so heighten the conflict that, from whichever angle one looks at it, is not in the interest of Muslims. Imagine its fallout throughout the country! India has not yet forgotten the trauma of Partition.

When Dr Edward Thompson, a historian, once pointed out to Jinnah that Hindus and Muslims live together in thousands of Indian towns and villages, Jinnah replied that in no way did it affect their separate nationality. Two nations, according to Jinnah, confronted one another in every village and town, and he, therefore, desired that they should be divided into two states. The Muslims in India are still paying the price for this division.

SEPARATISM OR any semblance of it will not help the cause of the Muslims. Why was Maulana Azad opposed to confrontation and separatism? He judged the matter "from the point of view of Muslim interest alone", as he puts it in his book, *India Wins Freedom*, and came to the conclusion that separatism "can in no way benefit them or allay their legitimate fears".

I am told that Shahabuddin had electoral gains in mind in calling for the meet. I do not know how far this is true. My fear is that Shahabuddin

has got so worked up, probably because of Hindu fundamentalists, that he believes that a show of Muslim solidarity can act as an effective pressure.

When the issue is one of Muslim identity versus Hindu identity, it ultimately transcends the limits of culture and takes on the shape of fundamentalism. I have no doubt that a Hindu Rashtra will result in the disintegration of India. But exclusive platforms or conferences of Muslims may ultimately set in motion the type of Hindu togetherness which will destroy the Indian polity. The fight of Shahabuddin or, for that matter, any person against Hindu chauvinism, has to be secular in character and action. The bias against the Muslims will have to be fought by all. ■

The fight of Shahabuddin or, for that matter, any person against Hindu chauvinism, has to be secular in character and action. The bias against the Muslims will have to be fought by all Indians

PROFILE

PHIL S. GORDON



The two Shahabuddins

*Sensitive soul or
canny vote-catcher?*

There are two Syed Shahabuddins. One is the articulate former diplomat who might get a little carried away now and then, but who believes firmly in secularism. And then, there's the other Shahabuddin, the deliberate exploiter of communal sentiments, the demagogue whose politics flow in a direct line from the pre-Partition Muslim League's.

Interview him and you will meet the first Shahabuddin. He will tell you about his Foreign Service career, will recall how he mobilised world opinion against Pakistan during the 1971 war and will seem the soul of reason. Talk to him about communal riots and he will be overcome with emotion, his voice will break and you will think, he's a sensible sort of chap but, obviously, he has a very emotional streak.

That's one Shahabuddin. But there is another. There is the man who called for a boycott of Republic Day celebrations by all Muslims in 1987; the demagogue who turned *The Satanic Verses* into an international issue after reading an interview in *SUNDAY* and who refused to condemn Imam Khomeini's death threat; the rabble-rouser who told a rally at the Boat Club that when the time came, Muslims should forget everything else and do what they had to; and the politician who continues to fuel outrage within his community over the Babri Masjid issue.

The two Shahabuddins are very different creatures—seemingly impossible to reconcile. Shahabuddin's friends and supporters (such as Chandra Shekhar) claim to know only the first. And his critics (most of the media, for instance) keep drawing attention to the second.

TO THE extent that he is self-analytical, Shahabuddin seems to think that the first characterisation is nearer the truth. He bristles at suggestions that he is a demagogue or a rabble-rouser and utterly rejects the allegation that he is communal.

The Shahabuddin version goes something like this: of course, he is secular. He is wedded to the notion of a secular, multi-communal India which he served with distinction during his Foreign Service days. But it would be foolish to deny that there is a lot of communalism in India or that Muslims are disillusioned and bitter. The danger with Muslim alienation is that there is no shortage of anti-national fringe forces waiting to mislead unhappy

Muslims by whipping up a communal frenzy. On the other hand, he recognises that this alienation exists but, as a member of a national political party, tells Muslims that there is an answer within the mainstream, within the framework of secular India.

His critics, he argues, fail to see this. They feel that by acknowledging the alienation and by articulating the disillusionment, he is contributing to both—which is plainly silly. And, because he encourages Muslims to demonstrate, to boycott and to vote 'effectively'—all quite democratic techniques—he gets called a rabble-rouser or anti-secular.

TO BE fair, Shahabuddin's characterisation of himself is well-argued and has a certain plausibility. Perhaps, you think, this is the real Shahabuddin. Sadly, this impression is dispelled by hearing his critics analyse the other Shahabuddin.

Their version runs as follows: Shahabuddin's Foreign Service career was impressive enough and that's why people had high hopes of him when he joined politics. Unfortunately, he then chose to achieve national prominence in the shortest possible time—and the best way to do this was to play the Muslim card. Just as the RSS tells Hindus that secularism is destroying their religion, so Shahabuddin tells Muslims that Islam is in danger. In doing so, he plays on the insecurities of a minority.

To do this, he searches for issues to substantiate the Islam-in-danger line. Thus, a judgement saying that Muslim men should pay maintenance to their wives becomes a Hindu assault on the core of Islam. A dispute over a mosque is portrayed as an attempt to do Muslims out of their places of worship. A largely unreadable English novel is transformed into the centrepiece of an attack on the Prophet which must be repulsed.

All this talk of articulating disillusionment is humbug—in fact, Shahabuddin exploits 'alienation'. It is true that he does not advocate violence or secession, but that is because he has nothing to gain from such a course. When he recommends democratic solutions, he means the ballot or, more accurately, 'vote for me'.

Obviously, Shahabuddin rejects the second characterisation. But judging by the way the Congress(I) is courting him, he has certainly got the Muslims to vote his way. ■

**Shahabuddin says that
he is merely
articulating
disillusionment. His
critics retort that he is
exploiting alienation
for political gains**



And unique the Va

With terrorist incidents on the rise and fundamentalists gathering strength, Kashmir seems to be going the way of Punjab

Kalashnikovs, detonators, Molotov cocktails, gelatine fuses, mortars, masked militants—Kashmir is acquiring an entirely new vocabulary. Through newspapers, radio and television, the inhabitants of the Valley are fast becoming familiar with a range of official terms and phrases—crackdown, shoot-at-sight, hideout, NSG (National Security Guard) and NSA (National Security Act).

In the past, protests in the state meant the raising of anti-India slogans by bands of hoodlums; stone-pelting of cops or a rare shot in the air qualified as violence. The high point of such encounters was the occasional recovery of a country-made pistol or two from the trouble-makers.

Times have changed since then. In less than one and a half years, as many as 97 bomb blasts have shattered the tranquillity of the Valley. Since January 1988, at least 52 people have been killed and another 250 hurt in violent incidents. And the toll of death and destruction of the past 16 months far exceeds the corresponding tally over the last 40 years. Even more shocking is the fact that in only one year, the police have arrested more than 80 'terrorists' and 300 suspected accomplices in the state. The inventory of arms recovered from the militants is equally disturbing: two dozen mortars and Chinese rockets; over 70 Soviet-made Kalashnikov assault rifles; two dozen foreign-made pistols and revolvers; more than a quintal of explosive material with hun-

dreds of detonators and time devices. For the first time, raiding parties came upon stuff like sophisticated time-pencils, gelatine rods and synthetic fuse wires. Said a bewildered policeman: "Till a few years ago, the only protection we needed against the trouble-makers was a wire shield, a good match for their *lathis*." Today, they are being given self-loading rifles (SLRs) and bullet-proof vests as protection.

The beginnings of terrorism are visible today and Kashmir appears to have the makings of another Punjab. There is a group of desperados trained by Pakistan in subversion and violence and a broader section of disgruntled and unemployed youth who have no stake in the state. Deadly arms, ammunition and explosives are in abundance. The out-

laws thrive on the sympathy extended to them in the cities, as in remote villages, where the government is looked upon as an alien, oppressive force. The existence of religious fundamentalism, a widespread feeling of injustice, and a sympathetic and communal foreign power next-door further complicate the situation.

Chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah believes that the violence will soon die down. "Kashmiris are a peace-loving people who are mortally scared of even a simple knife," he told SUNDAY. "They are also opposed to violence because it hits their tourism-based economy." Senior police officers feel the same way. Deputy inspector general (range) A. M. Watali feels that Kashmir will never go Punjab's way. Terrorism in the Valley, he feels, is a media-made monster. It

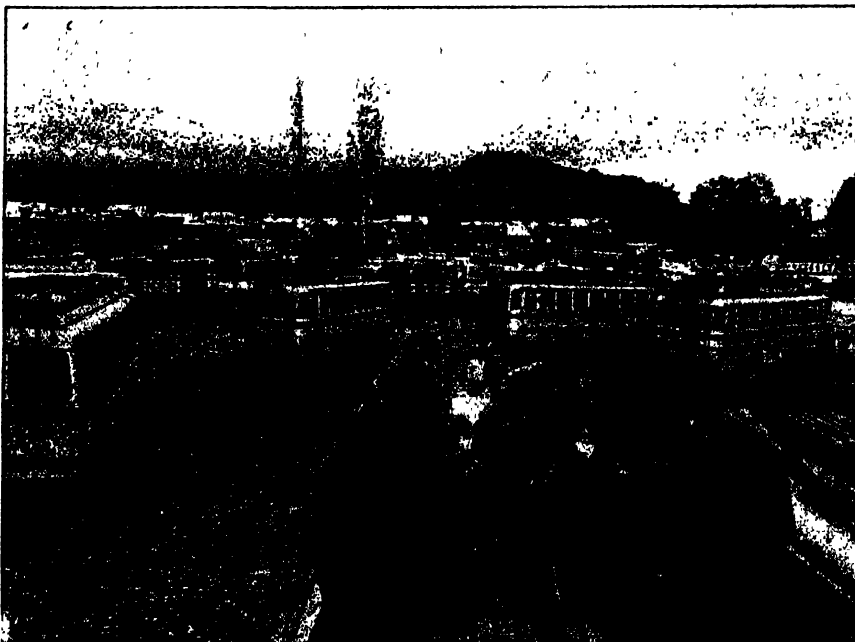
exists more in newspapers than in real life.

The truth, however, appears to be different, if one goes by some of the violent incidents witnessed in recent times:

- Kalashnikov-carrying youths attacked DIG Watali's house in Srinagar in September last year. The officer escaped unhurt because an alert guard fired at the assailants, killing one of them on the spot.

- Terrorists ambushed two tourist buses on two consecutive days near Magham, 25 km from Srinagar, on the way to Gulmarg and fired indiscriminately at the occupants. (The first incident took place at a time when the chief minister was supposed to pass that way.) For the first time in the history of J&K, eight tourists were injured in a terrorist attack.

• (Clockwise from right) After the violence: deserted streets; *bandh* in Kashmir; a regular feature; the police try to quell demonstrators: violence in the Valley



- Armed youths attacked various police stations in downtown Srinagar more than a dozen times in the past six months.

- Between 1 and 10 April as many as 15 bomb blasts rocked the Valley. The second week of the last month witnessed an incredible 18 bomb explosions.

- Every *bandh* sees militant youths openly defying curfew and ban orders, and brandishing Kalashnikovs on the streets of Srinagar.

What makes matters worse is the administration's inability to take lessons from its own failures. The police has repeatedly alienated the people by attacking and firing at mobs and processions, instead of cracking down on Pakistan-trained miscreants. Farooq's partymen agree, though off-the-record, that the mobs demonstrating during the recent *bandhs* could have been dispersed quite easily and the situation brought under control by some tactful

**The
spirit that makes the mould
breaks the mould.**

In technology, as in music, the confines of an existing mould is like a cocoon.

You make it yourself, but you also need to break it if you want to fly. And flying is always risky because there are no footprints in the sky, no flight highways.

Mukand's beginning as a

foundry, Mukand cast itself into the mould of a mini-steel plant as early as the 1940's. Mukand became the first to adopt the continuous casting process of steel making in the 1960's, even though the technology was in its infancy, worldwide. Mukand has already broken its mould and

become a mini-steel plant. Manufacturing not only a variety of specialty steels, also engaging in allied activities like machine building, bulk material handling equipment and engineering construction. While others lay in the comfort of conventional

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MASTERMINDS IN STEEL

11

handling. But in the past six months, the police have fired on mobs at least two dozen times. Says Mirwaiz Maulvi Farook, the powerful religious leader: "The police mishandling of the situation has not only alienated the common people but also made heroes out of ordinary youths."

The incident that occurred at Nowhatta on 7 April is illustrative of the state of affairs. Four Kalashnikov-toting teenagers fired at a police party and the onlookers carried them on their shoulders in a powerful exhibition of public support. The police was forced to beat a hasty retreat. According to eye-witness reports, the impromptu gesture of a small mob soon turned into a massive victory procession, as more and more people joined them on their march through the Naid Kadal area of Srinagar.

Unlike in the early Seventies, when the anti-India agitation in the Valley was instigated and led by Pakistani

infiltrators, the chaos in the recent months is home-grown. Separatist organisations are today better equipped than ever before, and the Abdullah government's consistent mishandling of the situation has helped them a great deal.

Shabir Shah, for instance, of the underground People's League was just another little known militant until May this year, when the police arrested his father Gulam Mohammad Shah in Anantnag. The old man died in police custody the next day and all hell broke loose in the Valley. There was hardly any city or town where *Gaibana Namaz-e-Janaza* was not held to pay tribute to the departed soul. And everywhere the ritual was followed by disturbances, ranging from stone-pelting to full-fledged arson. At several places, irate mobs fought pitched battles with the cops. The upshot of all this was that Shabir Shah emerged as a hero in the Valley.

Shah, who has gone underground ever since, has been playing his cards

"I don't want cheap publicity"

Farooq Ahmad, an ex-party politician and the growing influence in the valley

Farooq Ahmad is a well known name in the valley. He is a former party politician and has been active in the valley for many years.

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In that sense the situation is not new. The valley has been a hotbed of separatist activities for many years. The valley has been a hotbed of separatist activities for many years.

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These things are totally new to us. We have never had terrorism of this

"If people in Delhi feel that I should stand up and say 'Pakistan Zindabad' to become a hero, I will not do that"

kind, where Russian guns or Chinese soldiers are used. Now they are using Chinese hand grenades and bombs with plastic shells and time devices. This is all a part of their training.

There is a lot of training in the valley. There is a lot of training in the valley.

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with great finesse. He made a dramatic appearance at the city office of *Kashmir Times* to tell the paper's Srinagar bureau chief, Zafar Meeraz, that he did not believe in violence and terrorism. "We will create a situation where India will be forced to leave Kashmir," he informed Meeraz.

Two other organisations—Mahaz-e-Azadi and Islamic Students' League—can boast of a wide following among the anti-India elements of the Valley. These

three underground outfits work in close coordination under the unified command of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), founded more than 20 years ago in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) by Amanullah Khan.

As in Punjab, each of the militant outfits in Kashmir has several other frontal organisations like the Muslim Students' Front, the Badar Party, the Liberation Panthers and the Tiger Zia. According to the police, some of these

organisations have also begun to extort money from affluent shopkeepers belonging to their own community. Intelligence sources agree that the voluntary donations to these outfits from common people alone run into lakhs of rupees.

The advent of organised terrorism in the Valley is part of a well thought-out scheme originating in Pakistan. The situation in Kashmir, according to intelligence reports, is a direct outcome of former Pakistan President General Zia ul-Haq's machinations to create instability in the Valley. Zia deputed the notorious Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) to draw up a comprehensive plan for Kashmir sometime in 1986, which was brought into effect from 1987 onwards.

According to intelligence sources, the ISI contacted the pro-Pakistani elements of the Valley through the JKLF and recruited Kashmiri youths for their training camps. Some of the camps mentioned in intelligence reports were



Farooq Abdullah inspecting the arms recovered by the state police: sophisticated arsenal

state's police has failed to contain violence.

They have been more effective than the police in Punjab.

But the cops did nothing when masked men burnt the national flag in front of the Jama Masjid recently.

You want the police to go there with tanks like the Chinese did recently? How does it matter if a few miscreants burn a flag? Ordering the police into a mosque with 50,000 people in it is something which India can never think of doing.

Intelligence agencies have confirmed reports that most of the political parties in the state, including yours, have links with the extremists. How far is that true?

We are looking into the charges against the other parties. Regarding my party, there was a report in *The Hindustan Times* and I have sued them for damages worth Rs 50 lakhs. They were later willing to apologise

but I said 'no'. Recently somebody told me that my name is 13th on the list (the list of terrorists prepared by the intelligence agencies).

I don't know if your name is on it, but there are many politicians...

There is a person. Dr Shah (former chief minister G.M. Shah) openly said at the Iqbal Park meeting last year that he is a Pakistani and that he has been fighting for Pakistan for a long time. And he goes to fight the Babri Masjid issue with Maulana Bukhari, the head priest of the Jama Masjid in Delhi.

But you had met Amanullah Khan (the founder of the JKLF) in Pakistan.

What is wrong with that? I never met him as chief minister of a state. So what if he is the founder-president of the JKLF? He has also been anti-Pakistan. He has been fighting for a free Baltistan, a free Kashmir. Today, they say, he wants to be a part of Pakistan.

But why did you go to Pakistan to meet him?

I have also been to America. Does that mean I am a CIA agent?

You have talked about reviving the spirit of the Congress-National Conference accord...

The accord is essential. It ensures that all regions will develop faster and the hatred between the communities will disappear. It is a fact that state governments which are on good terms with the Congress(I) are benefiting on all fronts. Today, luckily, we have a good relationship with the Centre and we are trying to get things done faster.

Will you strike an alliance with the Congress in the coming elections?

I am going to support them openly. There is no doubt about it.

Everybody feels that your mass base has eroded considerably...

I don't know what yardstick you are using to measure my popularity. I don't want cheap publicity. If people in Delhi feel that Farooq Abdullah should stand up and say 'Pakistan Zindabad' to become a hero, I will not do that. I would rather be unpopular. As a part of the nation you have ups and downs. The positive results of the accord will be visible some day and the people who are saying that my popularity is on the wane will have to take back their words during the elections.

held in Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, Ilaka Ghair (NWFP) and Shinkiari. Amanullah Khan's deputy, Raja Muzaffar, the intelligence sources insist, is still running some of these outfits.

Interrogation of many Pakistan-trained militants revealed that they were sent back in batches of five to prevent the arrest of one member leading to the capture of all others. Chief minister Abdullah maintains that there has been no discernible change in the Pakistani attitude after Benazir Bhutto took over.

Last year, realising the gravity of the situation, director general of police Ghulam Jeelani Pandit ordered all police stations in the state to make a list of

missing youths in their areas. This information tallied almost precisely with the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) reports, which the top brass of the state police had been taking very lightly earlier.

Like the terrorists in Punjab, the militants of the Valley are openly backed by a vast section of religious fundamentalists. Religious propaganda by organisations like the Jamait-e-Islami and Islamic Jamaitul Tulba, in the mosques and educational institutions of the state, works to their advantage. Fundamentalism is on the rise, with organisations such as the Hazb-e-Islami de-

End of the affair

The Congress(I)-National Conference alliance collapses

Being branded a Delhi durbar stooge spells doom for any Jammu and Kashmir politician. So it is with Farooq Abdullah, the Valley's most popular leader until sometime ago. In the early Eighties people vied to stop and shake hands with him as he drove around town on his motorcycle. Today, Abdullah cannot think of venturing out of his bungalow except in a bullet-proof car, escorted by sundry securitymen. And such is the mass hatred directed at him that last year an old man ran up to him from among a stone-throwing crowd and tried to attack him with his bare hands.

The Congress-National Conference alliance appears to have outlived its utility. While both partners cling to each other for lack of better alternatives, the honeymoon is clearly over. Chief minister Farooq Abdullah is hard put to contain dissidence in the National Conference despite distribution of ministerial berths to every second legislator. Party insiders say that Abdullah will come in for more flak in the near future as some senior ministers are unhappy over the allocation of portfolios.

The state of the Congress is at its worst. The PCC chief Mohammad Shafi Qureshi has been boycotted by a 40-strong dissident group, led by former state unit president and power minister Ghulam Rasool Kar. In fact the party is divided into three camps which have the blessings of

the central leaders, Ghulam Nabi Azad, K.N. Singh and M.L. Fotedar respectively. The past two years have seen an amazing number of party leaders looking after Kashmir, showing the AICC(I)'s lack of seriousness in dealing with the dissidence problem. The chief minister, however, told SUNDAY that the alliance between the two parties would continue in the next parliamentary and Assembly elections. Even the Congress appears unconcerned about the fact that there has been no breakthrough on the two main points of the accord—economic development and communalism. While communalism has gained ground in the recent past, projects such as the Dulhasti power plant and public sector units have not taken off.

The state has failed to tap even a fraction of its two major resources: hydro power and tourism. The J&K government is paying Rs 80 crores as subsidy to power tariff, a heavy burden by any standards. It is finding it difficult to supply 350 mw of power to the Valley, even though the total potential of power generation of only one of the state's many rivers, Chenab, is about 1,500 mw.

The same is true of tourism. The present earnings—Rs 500 crores—of the tourism industry, according to rough estimates, comprise only one-third of the total revenue potential. Much of this money is wasted in



unprofitable ventures like the building of golf courses and five star hotels, instead of concentrating on developing lake-side gardens and less pricey hotels.

Common people like the *shikara* owners and taxi drivers maintain that the only sincere developmental work took place during Governor's Rule from March to November 1986. The fact that violence was minimal during this period proves that there is some correlation between the lack of development work and outbreaks of violence. Even Opposition leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed says he prefers Governor's Rule to the present government.

Mufti has, on behalf of the Janata Dal-sponsored National Front, begun negotiations with the anti-alliance parties such as the Awami National Committee of Maulvi Farook, J&K National Conference of Abdul Ghani Lone, and even Jamait-e-Islami. The idea is to forge a joint alliance on the lines of Muslim United Front (MUF)



which bagged about 35 per cent of the total votes in the last Assembly elections. Haryana chief minister Devi Lal has given Mufti the green signal to rope in anyone who is opposed to the Congress-National Conference alliance. Devi Lal has set the stage for such an attempt, by declaring in Srinagar last week, that Maulvi Farook and MUF's Qazi Nisar are not communal leaders. With his characteristic astuteness, Lal has also sent feelers to Farooq Abdullah to join the united Opposition.

The Opposition is clearly not averse to taking the support of communal elements in Kashmir. The only condition Lal insists upon, according to party insiders, is that the word 'Muslim' should not figure in the name of the new alliance.

If such an alliance does work out, the people of the state would be the worst sufferers. For, the contest, then, would be between a corrupt and inefficient government and a communal Opposition.

**The police rounding up militants:
tactful handling required**

creeping that no Muslim woman should step out of her house without a *burkha*. Even school and college girls have been advised to cover their heads with a white *dupatta*. The gravity of the situation was evident in Srinagar early this month, when miscreants threw acid on two women who had not covered their heads.

The situation is particularly tragic because none of the political parties in the state appear to have either the will or the manpower to counter such threats. Ghulam Rasool Kar, the former chief of the state Congress unit, maintains that the leaders of democratic parties are fast becoming irrelevant in Kashmir. "No one is willing to listen to the political leaders," agrees Maulvi Farook. At a recent meeting organised in the Jama Masjid to condole the death of Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini, the Opposition leaders, including the former chief minister G.M. Shah, were not allowed to speak. Militants, their faces muffled to guard against recogni-

The advent of organised terrorism in the Valley is part of a well thought out scheme originating in Pakistan. According to Intelligence sources, militant Kashmiri youth have been trained by the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)

tion, forcibly occupied the stage and took over the meeting. In the recent past, there have also been several instances of masked militants burning the national flag in front of the mosque.

Says Abdul Ghani Lone of the J&K People's Conference: "The people have a moral basis for their opposition to the accession of Kashmir to India. After all, the promise for holding a plebiscite was made by leaders like Nehru and Rajagopalacharya," he says. "You need a very sincere yet clever Kashmir policy if the confidence of the people is to be gained," he adds.

And it cannot be denied that the rest of the country regards the Kashmiri demonstrators with suspicion. No Opposition leader has ever demanded an enquiry when people are killed in police firing in the state. Says Lone: "It is taken for granted that the nationalist cops have gunned down pro-Pakistan protestors even if their movement is against a hike in power tariff."

But, perhaps, the crux of the problem is that the Centre does not have a Kashmir policy. The Union government's approach, all through the last few years of turmoil, has been to deal with the immediate problem, without trying to look for long-term solutions. It is in keeping then, that their answer to the recent spurt of violence has been to put up sand bags in front of police stations, increase the strength of paramilitary personnel and deploy a crack unit of the National Security Guards (NSG) in the Valley.

Vipul Mudgal/Srinagar

The treasure hunter

Jayant Malhoutra quits the Janata Dal to become the treasurer of the Janata Party again

OPPOSITION

What does Jayant Malhoutra, who recently joined the Janata Party as its treasurer, have in common with soccer stars? Well, the politician keeps shunting between

the Janata Dal and the Janata Party just as the latter keep switching teams every year. Malhoutra who made a frantic bid to become the treasurer of the Janata Dal and was tripped out of the post by fellow-industrialist Kamal Morarka, quit the Dal to join the Janata Party led by Indubhai Patel and Subramaniam Swamy as its treasurer.

Malhoutra, a Chandra Shekhar buddy, who had waxed eloquent about the Dal's bright future only a few months back when Chandra Shekhar, in tandem with Devi Lal, seemed to be gaining ground within the Dal, said he was disillusioned with people V.P. Singh had appointed to the party's top slots. "One would have expected minimum norms of character, integrity and track record to be selected. V.P. Singh came into the Opposition with an aura of honesty. But his slogan 'corruption should be given the marching order' has now become toothless because of the people he has chosen for the key posts." Malhoutra felt that all was not lost yet and that V.P. Singh could still set things right and the two parties (Janata Dal and Janata Party) could work together. He charged that at present the Dal's key posts were being manned by ex-Congress(I) people.

Subramaniam Swamy, who was in Bombay to welcome Malhoutra into his fold, alleged that in Uttar Pradesh, portraits of Indira Gandhi occupied pride of place in Janata Dal offices. He said that in Arif Mohammad Khan's constituency, a ceremony had, in fact, been organised, to install a portrait of the former Prime Minister, while the legacy of Jayaprakash Narayan was being ignored. At this rate, predicted Swamy, Maneka Gandhi will soon be putting up Sanjay Gandhi's portraits in Dal offices. According to Swamy, ex-Congressmen are using the Dal as a platform to defeat Rajiv



(L to r) Jayant Malhoutra, Kamal Morarka and Chandra Shekhar

Gandhi before proceeding to restructure the Congress minus Rajiv Gandhi.

Political observers, however, felt, that Malhoutra's exit from the Janata Dal to become the treasurer of the Janata Party and Morarka's accession to the coveted post in the Janata Dal has more

to it than meets the eye. What is significant, they say, is that both Malhoutra and Morarka are Chandra Shekhar's men and it is possible that the old king-maker, who has been marginalised by Singh in recent times, has succeeded in putting his henchmen in a vital

End of a manhunt

Police arrest the builder of a highrise that collapsed in Calcutta

Just as Pradip Kundalia got off a taxi outside a nursing home in South Calcutta on the evening of 27 June, waiting detectives of the Calcutta Police, stepped out of the shadows. "Mr Kundalia?" one of them asked. "Yes, I mean, no," was the flustered answer. The manhunt was over.

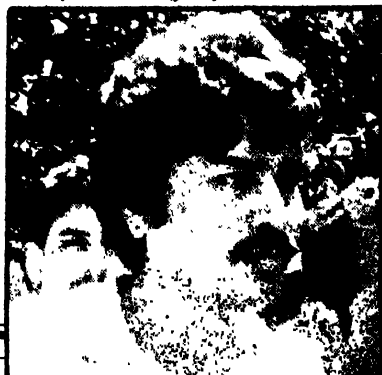
For one week, the most wanted man in Calcutta was this unknown construction baron. On 19 June, a six-storeyed apartment complex in south Calcutta had crumbled like a sand castle on the beach crushing a dozen people. And Kundalia, the missing builder, once made an honorary traffic warden by the police, quickly became the most wanted man in Calcutta.

While firemen dug out broken bodies from under the rubble of the newly-built apartment complex, the police, spurred on by chief minister Jyoti Basu, set an elaborate trap.

Expecting Kundalia to visit his mother, dying of cancer at a nursing home, detectives staked out the area. After a six-day vigil under mounting pressure, they finally snared the elusive builder.

Even as the frenzied manhunt continued, Calcutta's bumbling city fathers begun the customary ritual of fingerpointing. Urban development minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya blamed "unscrupulous businessmen" for using building materials of poor

Pradip Kundalia: guilty?



post of both the parties.

Malhoutra used to be the treasurer of the Janata Party before the Janata Dal was formed. When the Janata Party split into Hegde-Chandra Shekhar camps, Malhoutra hitched his wagon to Chandra Shekhar's, hoping that the Swamy-Devegowda lobby—which seemed to have the backing of Chandra Shekhar—would outmanoeuvre the Hegde loyalists. But once the Swamy-Devegowda rump was clearly outplayed following the formation of the Janata Dal, where both Hegde and Chandra Shekhar became important functionaries, Malhoutra decided to hop into the Dal band-wagon by Chandra Shekhar's side. But once he came under cloud after V.P. Singh decided to have his way in managing the Dal's affairs and Swamy kept firing anti-V.P. Singh salvos from his Janata Party headquarters, Chandra Shekhar may have decided to have a footing in both the parties, so as to have enough leeway in case new alignments were to shape up. And it is quite possible that Malhoutra is one of his feet in the Janata Party while Morarka is the other in the Janata Dal.

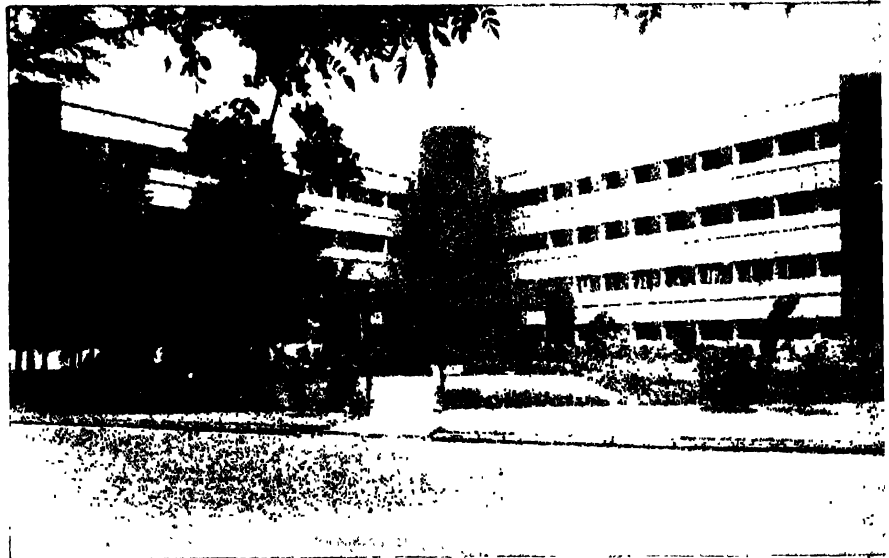
Oiga Tellis/Bombay

quality. Calcutta's millionaire-Marxist mayor, Kamal Kumar Basu declared that proper precautions were not taken during the building's construction.

But Buddhadev Bhattacharya's promises to stamp out corruption in the corporation may not be easy. Even Hercules, when he went to clean the Augean stables might have had an easier job; buildings department officials have lined their pockets and looked the other way. Of the 5,000 unauthorised constructions in the city, only a few have been demolished. Mayor Kamal Basu, who benignly presides over this Mecca of petty fraud and grand larceny, is eloquent about his personal honesty. "Why should I take bribes. I have too much money as it is," said this cut-rate Croesus recently.

Public opinion has already found Kundalia guilty. For the average Bengali chauvinist, who resents the *baniyas'* control over Calcutta's commercial wealth, including prime chunks of real estate in Alipore and Ballygunge, Kundalia is already guilty. Whether he really is guilty of negligence, may be proved if he does stand trial.

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta



Sri Ramachandra Medical College: costly gift

A hospital for a song

The state takes over a private medical college without having to pay any compensation

TAMIL NADU

Two and two make four, and so do M. Karunanidhi's words and the deeds of a liquor baron. One of the first things Karunanidhi said after taking over as the chief minister of the state in November last year was that the DMK government would wipe out the liquor empire that had been allowed to flourish by his predecessor, M.G. Ramachandran, and, six months later, liquor baron N.P.V. Ramaswamy Udayar handed over the multi-crore Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute (SRMCI) to the government without demanding a rupee in return.

The take-over of the SRMCI, one of the three self-financing medical colleges in the state was at once interpreted by the media as a sign of thaw in the relations between the DMK supremo and one of the former MGR lieutenants. It is common knowledge that Udayar had built the huge complex on a 176-acre plot at Porur, on the outskirts of Madras, in 1983 with MGR's support. Many say that MGR had even partly financed the project, besides offering Udayar 122 acres of government land for the purpose.

The SRMCI, which is modelled on the

Downstate Medical Centre in Brooklyn, USA, where MGR had undergone specialised treatment and kidney transplant in 1984, was a flourishing institution and remains one of the finest hospitals in the state. Udayar formed a trust to run the SRMCI with himself functioning as the managing trustee. A couple of his family members were also on the board of trustees and the college charged about Rs four lakhs for each seat under the management's quota.

According to government sources, the trustees had agreed to hand over the institution to the state after Karunanidhi had expressed his desire to take over the SRMCI. But what surprised many was the fact that the trustees demanded no compensation for a complex that is estimated to be valued at Rs 34 crores. And this is what gave rise to media speculation about an understanding having been reached between the chief minister and Udayar.

Political observers say that Karunanidhi's initial threat against the liquor lobby was directed at Udayar, who had made millions of rupees from the sale of country brew and 'Indian made foreign liquor'. Karunanidhi, who must have thought that by hitting at Udayar, he would successfully seal off a major source of fund for the AIADMK, may have got more than what he had gunned for. Now he has Udayar on his side and a profitable partnership between the two may soon begin to take shape. After all, it is now 18 months since MGR died by the sea and, surely, it is time for new alliances.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Making a move

NFDC demands a fabulous sum for vacating the premises it rented for its Bombay offices

MAHARASHTRA

Scene I: A businessman from Karnataka leases out office space to a government corporation for five years.

Scene II: The corporation occupies the area but also acquires property of its own in course of time and decides to shift office while renting out the one it had leased.

Scene III: The lease period is over. The businessman wants the corporation to vacate his premises, but it demands a hefty sum to move out. The businessman is faced with a difficult choice: if he goes to court the property would be tied up in a long-drawn litigation, and, if he does not pay up, the corporation would not move. What does he do?

The scenario must be after the National Film Development Corporation's (NFDC) heart because it happens to be the film body's own story. Sajeer Rajaram Nayak, who has business establishments in Karnataka and Bombay, leased out 2,380 sq ft of office space to NFDC on the ground floor of Dalamal Towers, at Bombay's Nariman Point, in 1981. The NFDC had said that it needed the space for about five years, by which time, it expected to have its own property. Nayak finalised the lease deal with the corporation, charging rent at the rate of Rs 10 per sq ft.

All seemed to go well till the lease expired on 31 March, 1986. Nayak had written to NFDC well in advance, informing it that he would like to have the premises back the day the agreement expired. Nayak's letter was not replied to at first and, then, after a period of silence, NFDC wrote back with a request for renewing the agreement for another five years on the earlier terms and conditions. But Nayak expressed his disinclination to do so.

According to Nayak, NFDC maintained only a skeleton staff at Dalamal Towers since it had shifted its headquarters to the Nehru Centre at Worli covering 9,000 sq ft on three floors. The corporation had also acquired space in Regent Chambers at Nariman Point, but chose to rent it out to Indian Bank. The film body rented out yet another proper-

ty it owned in Shiv Sagar Estate to the Hinduja's, who used it to open offices of Madras-based Ashok Leyland which they had acquired.

After lying low for more than a year, the NFDC authorities stirred again on 11 August, 1988, by requesting Nayak to meet them in order to settle the issue. But no agreement was reached at the meeting and the corporation continued to occupy the space without paying any compensation. In January this year, Nayak wrote to NFDC again saying that it should pay him at the rate of Rs 30 per sq ft for the period between 1 June, 1986, and 31 December, 1988, emphasising the fact it was the rate the NFDC was itself charging others for properties that it had rented out.

The letter provoked a response from NFDC after a long interval. In May this year, Malati Tambe Vaidya, the NFDC managing director (MD), met Nayak with the suggestion that the corporation



The NFDC office in Dalamal Towers: turned into a godown

would vacate his part of the premises if he paid NFDC Rs 15 lakhs, and the part lent out to them by Nayak's associate concern, Anusya Arvind Trust, if Nayak agreed to shell out another Rs 20 lakhs.

Nayak said that he was so pressed for space that he agreed to pay Rs 21 lakhs to retrieve the office space from NFDC's clutches. The corporation's chairman, Burjor Karanjia, pleaded helplessness saying that the issue was

Hooked to a book

A slim volume on goddess Laxmi becomes a best-seller

Guess which is the best-selling book in Gujarat today. No, it is not a Jnanpith award-winner or an action-packed pot-boiler, but a 48-page booklet in praise of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. The book, containing four colour illustrations of the goddess, stories of incredible miracles experienced by people and the rites and rituals associated with her worship, has become a blockbuster in Gujarat—a state having a literacy level of 43 per cent.

The book has found a shelf in every Gujarati home and is a sell-out even in the villages. Ahmedabad's Mahadev Ramchandra Jagushte, the largest of the four publishers of the book, *Vaibhav Laxmi*, has alone sold 12 lakh copies of the book since the first edition appeared in 1984. The book, at present is selling at the incredible rate of 30,000 copies per month, without showing any sign of the demand slumping in the near future.

Come Friday, and housewives, college girls, working women, mothers—in fact, anyone beset with

mundane, worldly problems—light lamps, burn josticks and sit down to read the book for at least 10 minutes, hoping that their woes will come to an end. Claims Udayan Jagushte, the book's publisher, who is armed with an American marketing and management degree, the worshippers begin to get results within a few weeks.

The readers, apparently, are the book's biggest marketing agents, who gift copies of the book to their friends, and thus help keep the number of readers growing. Jagushte

The book is selling at an incredible rate of 30,000 copies per month, without showing any sign of the demand slumping





strictly in the jurisdiction of Vaidya and general manager Ravi Gupta. But neither of them was available for comment. In reply to repeated calls, Vaidya's secretary simply said that the MD did not wish to say anything on the subject.

In sheer desperation, Nayak is now planning to go to court over the issue and, if he does so, NFDC could find itself embroiled in the familiar courtroom scenes which are an integral part of many of the films it finances.

Olga Tellis/Bombay

and other publishers say they keep receiving hundreds of letters from readers, describing the "miracles" they experience after reading the book, and, in order to keep the publicity hype on, some of these letters are published in subsequent editions. "We keep making additions by carrying more colourful illustrations and more interesting miracles," says Deepak, another partner of the 118-year-old Jagushte publishing firm. And, not to be outdone, the film industry, too, has stepped in and has launched the shooting of a Gujarati film on the goddess so as not to miss out on the money-making binge the publishing industry is presently enjoying.

The book, originally written by V.L. Shintre, in Marathi, flopped in neighbouring Maharashtra where 4,000 copies of the first edition are yet to be sold out. To this, there might be a sociological explanation: the great bulk of the educated Maharashtrians, being a salaried class, can hope to derive only minor gains while the Gujaratis, with their trading and business interests, hope to become millionaires overnight. But whether the book has really worked miracles for its readers or not is not known for certain; but it surely has for its publishers.

Maresh Trivedi / Ahmedabad

Storm after the lull

Bodo militants step up violence after a month of relative calm

ASSAM

Militants in India's north and the north-east seem to think alike: they have adopted a common strategy based on the belief that power flows from the blast of a bomb. Close on the heels of a shattering explosion at New Delhi railway station that left nine people dead on 12 June, the Bodo militants in the state set off a powerful explosive at the Kokrajhar railway station on 20 June, killing seven people, including a jawan of the Assam Rifles, and grievously injuring 14 others.

The blast at the railway station signalled the renewal of an orchestrated violence by the All Bodo Students' Union

to the Assam Police Task Force, and the driver of the vehicle died on the spot;

- On the same day, another bomb exploded on the railway tracks at the Barpeta Road station, causing considerable damage to the tracks.

According to another police officer, "The Bodos have set some sort of a record. In just five months, starting from early February, there have been nearly 950 violent incidents and over 300 people have been killed." This record, said the officer, pales the doings of such outfits as the PLA (People's Liberation Army) of Manipur and the NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland) which are avowedly wedded to violence.

The ABSU, which is leading the Bodoland agitation, however, still claims that their movement is peaceful. But a recent statement issued by Dr Phukan Chandra Boro, chairman of the Bodo Volunteer Force (BVF), a militant wing of the ABSU, suggests that the move-



A train with ABSU slogans on a coach: the tracks are threatened

(ABSU)—which is demanding a separate state for the tribals—after a relative lull of about a month. The idea behind this stepped-up militancy was obviously to pressure the Centre and the state government into accepting the ABSU's demands. "Our information is that there will be no let-up in the violence from now on," confided a senior police official.

And he could not have been more right

- Four days later, on 24 June, a timed device went off at a marketplace in Udalguri—which, along with Kokrajhar, forms the hot-bed of the agitation—injuring six people;

- On 27 June, a day after the 340-hour bandh called by the ABSU went into effect on 26 June, a powerful device was detonated at Bhurtinali in Kokrajhar district, blowing up a bus carrying 17 policemen. Ten securitymen, belonging

ment leaders are planning to take to insurgency. According to Boro, six lakh youths would be recruited to form a 'Bodo regiment' to fight for a separate state.

Contrary to popular belief, informed sources in the government say that the militants are neither being helped by the insurgent groups of the north-east nor the GNLFF, but are being trained by their own men, who were at one time in the Social Security Bureau (SSB), an organisation that was formed by the police in the north-east after the Sino-Indian war. The SSB personnel were trained in sabotage techniques and were expected to operate behind enemy lines. Experts feel that the methods used in the recent spate of explosions were too sophisticated to be the handiwork of untrained people.

Radhika Ramaseshan/Guwahati

Cooperative conspiracy?

Arjun Singh's men disregard state orders to embarrass chief minister Motilal Vora

MADHYA PRADESH

Chief minister Motilal Vora appears to be having a rough ride with Arjun Singh, his predecessor, who was unseated following the Churhat lottery scandal, trying to torpedo Vora's reign. The power struggle between the two Congress(I) leaders has assumed such proportions that it has become a case of the Congress(I) versus the Congress(I) in the state.

The latest instance in which Vora found his authority rudely challenged involved the farmers' cooperative lobby, which is known to be patently pro-Singh. Vohra had announced sometime back that penalty interest on loans—to the tune of Rs 166 crores—imposed on defaulting farmers will be waived, but the Land Development Bank of Madhya Pradesh (LDBMP), controlled by Arjun Singh's lieutenants, made sure that the move was scuttled.

What is of significance is that Vora tried to appease the cooperative lobby, but it remained implacable. LDBMP czars disregarded the government order exempting defaulting farmers from paying penalty interest on loans they had taken. Radheyshyam Sharma, head of the LDBMP and an Arjun Singh camp-follower, however, went ahead with collecting the interest from at least 1,000 farmers, undermining the Congress(I)'s rural vote bank. Sharma maintained that the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) had not accepted the state government's decision and that the NABARD had not, in fact, been consulted on the matter.

Finding themselves thus challenged by Arjun Singh's men, Vora's supporters appealed to the party high command to chasten the cooperative lobby. But whether Delhi will risk antagonising Arjun Singh further, with the general elections round the corner, is left to be seen.

M.V. Kher/Raipur

Mission merger

Zomi separatists in Burma and Bangladesh want to join India

INSURGENCY

The mandarins in India's foreign and home ministries are now in a flap. Much to their embarrassment, a tribe called Zomi, inhabiting Burma's Chin and Rakhine (Arakan) state and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh, has sought the "merger" of its lands with India. Though New Delhi has categorically told the Zomi leaders that it does not support their demand, some Zomi organisations have already declared that they have "ceded" their territories from Burma and "joined" the Indian Union. Burmese

Zomi areas are contiguous to Mizoram and Manipur, while the CHT has a long border with Mizoram.

Zomi is a new generic term by which the highlanders of the Mizo ethnic stock, split into 44 clans and belonging to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group, identify themselves. Sporadic insurgency has already begun in the Chin state in Burma and the CHT. Two guerrilla bands are simultaneously fighting for the merger of the Chin state—having an area of 9,000

sq miles and a population of one million—with India. While the Aizawl-based Chin leader Tialkhal's outfit, Chin National Front (CNF), is the latest one to take to bush war, a joint front of three bigger groups—Burma Zomi Liberation Front (BZLF), Burma Zomi Students' Union (BZSU) and Chin Democratic Front (CDF)—have already got alarm bells ringing in Rangoon.

After repeated warnings proved ineffective, the home ministry acted tough and had L. Sangama, the 40-year-old chief of the semi-insurgent Hill Tract Tribal Freedom Liberation Organisation (HTFLO), arrested in south Mizoram. Taking the cue from the Zomis in the

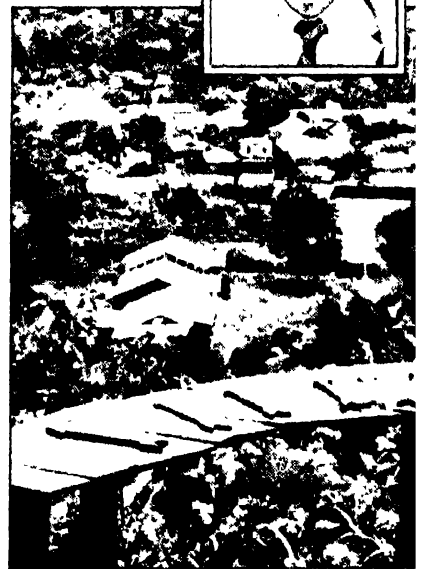
Chin state, the HTFLO has embarked on an armed campaign to secure the "merger" of the CHT (where the Zomis number about 50,000) with India.

Zomis are, however, undeterred by the snubbing from India. According to sources, a move is now under way to form a 'Provisional Zogam Government' in exile in India. The 'government' would represent all the factions fighting for the merger of their lands.

T. Gough, a former Manipur minister and the 'representative' of the Chin insurgent groups in India, told SUNDAY at Churachandpur, in Manipur, that the BZLF president Mangthanpau, now living in exile in Bangkok, had planned yet another trip to New Delhi to convince Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that India



A Chin village in Burma as seen from the Indian side of the border in Manipur: growing restive; (inset) T. Gough: high connections



should play the role of a "regional big brother" to save the Zomis in Burma. Mangthanpau's first visit to New Delhi on 16 November 1988, was a disaster. He got in touch with the Union minister of state for home, Santosh Mohan Dev, through AICC(I) general secretary Oscar Fernandes. Dev told him bluntly that India would not help the Chin insurgents. The Intelligence Bureau put him in an Indian Airlines airbus to Calcutta, from where he flew to Bangkok. His clandestine visit to New Delhi was arranged by Gough.

Mangthanpau has sent two memoranda to Rajiv Gandhi. Pointing out that Zomi lands were transferred to Burma

by the British, he has requested him to correct the "mistakes of history", and protect the Zomis, who are now facing "persecution and economic exploitation".

The decision to "merge" the Chin state with India was announced by the BZSU on 19 November, 1988, through posters. The posters were carried to Mizoram by BZSU president G. Sewa Khap.

The demand for greater Mizoram raised by the Zomi Reunification Organisation, of which Gougin is the vice-chairman, and the pro-democracy students' upheaval in Burma have apparently inspired the different Chin outfits to start a guerrilla war in their attempt to join India. According to Dr Dallen Haokip, a BZLF leader, about 5,000 Zomis are now being trained in insurgency in the Chin hills. Meanwhile, a three-page document sent by Sanngama from the Lawngtlai jail in south Mizoram to Rajiv Gandhi reveals that the HTFLO has also raised a 1,300-strong force of armed volunteers to wage a "war"



against Bangladesh. He has requested Rajiv Gandhi to allow them to "have the training (in arms) at Lawngtlai".

The authorities have not, however, imposed any restriction on the entry of BZLF activists into Mizoram and Manipur. Churachandpur is teeming with them, and the people on the Indian side have bought the merger idea. Said Thangkalal, a former Manipur MLA, "Chin land should come to us. The Zomis there are our people. We are the victims of history, as the British arbitrarily parcelled out the Chin and Arakan to Burma."

Santanu Ghosh/Aizawl and Churachandpur

By god's grace

A bureaucrat at odds with the CPI(M) wins the Marxists over by launching a clean-up of a temple tank

KERALA

Marxists are no believers, but it took an IAS officer to clean a temple tank to win the confidence of the CPI(M), the senior partner in the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) in the state. The E.K. Nayanar government's aversion to IAS officers, whom they see as agents of the Centre, is well known. But one young IAS officer, T. Balakrishnan, was singled out for some particularly harsh treatment.

Balakrishnan incurred the wrath of the CPI(M) because he happens to be the son-in-law of Balakrishna Pillai, the former electricity minister and Congress(J) strongman.

The LDF government has instituted an enquiry commission into the charges of corruption that were levelled against Pillai when he held the power portfolio in the Karunakaran ministry. Since then, Pillai's relatives have become punching bags for the CPI(M) bosses.

Balakrishnan, who was the tourism director and had a good track record, was made the collector of Trivandrum, a post he was not keen on taking up. But the CPI(M) brought pressure on the CPI revenue and tourism minister, P.S. Srinivasan, and Balakrishnan was put into the hottest administrative seat in the state. But before he could settle down, Srinivasan informed Balakrishnan that the Marxists wanted him transferred again—this time as the collector of Pathanamthitta. The reason: the CPI(M) wanted the police to raid the house of Balakrishna Pillai—Ram Nivas—which, incidentally, also happened to be the residence of T. Balak-

rishnan, the Trivandrum collector. And, according to the laws, the police was not empowered to raid a collector's residence, who was also the district magistrate. In order to have their way, the government decided to transfer Balakrishnan so that Ram Nivas ceased to be a collector's residence. But Balakrishnan, refused to be shunted about and went on a long leave to the U.K. instead, while Srinivasan, who had developed a liking for Balakrishnan's administrative skills, fought his case with the Marxists. The CPI leader succeeded in getting the transfer order revoked.

Once back on the Trivandrum saddle, Balakrishnan hit upon the idea—rather symbolically—of cleaning up the Padmatheertham, a sacred tank attached to the Sree Padmanabha Swamy temple, a Trivandrum landmark and one of the oldest temples in South India. The once

clean and beautiful Padmatheertham had degenerated into a breeding ground of mosquitoes. The tank's bed was covered with refuse and its holy water was badly polluted, posing a health hazard.

Balakrishnan's brainwave at once became the talk of the town and drew unstinted mass support. The Travancore royal family, which owns the temple, was the first to announce a donation of Rs two lakhs towards the cleaning operation and, realising that the move

was a masterstroke, the government, too, decided to make funds available.

The CPI(M) minister for cooperation and agricultural affairs, T.K. Ramakrishna, one of the most powerful men in the LDF government, himself launched the project. Other ministers and political leaders also made a beeline for the pond

and, for a time, warring forces such as the CPI(M) and the RSS, the CPI and the Congress(I) joined hands in the clean-up job. By god's grace or his own, Balakrishnan became a popular bureaucrat overnight and even the Marxists showered praises on him.

Shreedhar Pillai/Trivandrum



The Padmatheertham: sacred pond

INDUSTRY

Fanning a battle

The bitter advertising feud between Polar and Khaitan fans ends up at the doorstep of MRTPC

The hot breeze that Polar Fan Industries started blowing at the fag end of the last winter has turned torrid in the heat of the summer this year. In the first week of February, Polar opened its sales gambit for the forthcoming summer season with a publicity blitz which left other fan-makers somewhat stunned. It mentioned the names of three leading fan-makers and questioned whether buyers were getting their "money's worth". It published a comparative chart naming Usha, Orient and Khaitan, their different fan models and guarantee periods. Like a proud rooster, it even proclaimed that while the others offered one or two years' guarantee, Polar offered a seven-year guarantee. No doubt it was a good bargain on the face of it.

However, it was not long before the advertisement was noted and objected to. The other fan-makers were quick. The Khaitan and Polar ads: whose fan is better?

to register their objections with the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC). Khaitan Fan (India) Ltd, one of the most aggressive fan manufacturers, took a crusader's role in the campaign. It was pointed out that the Polar

advertisement had violated Section 36A(1) of the MRTP Act which lays down certain restrictions on disparaging advertisements.

The director general of investigations and registration of the Company Law Board took a similar view and

The fan market split

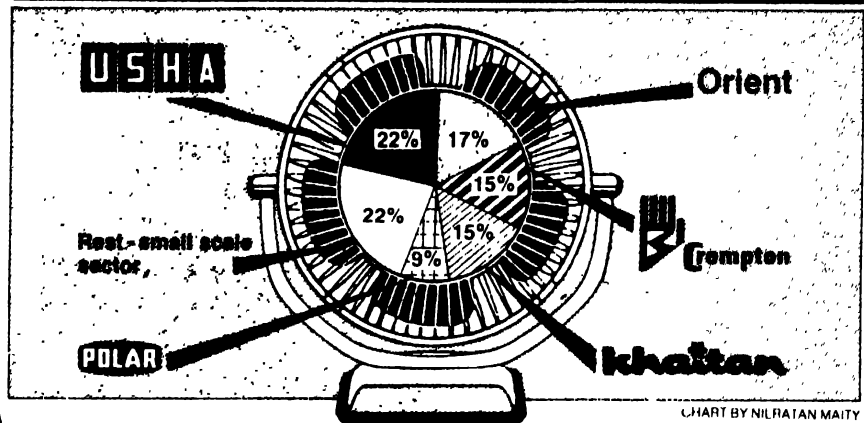


CHART BY NILRATAN MAITY

Fan buyers!
Do you want a 7-year guarantee or a fan like Khaitan?

Here are the Khaitan pluses

- ✓ Khaitan has a powerful 72 copper coil motor (weight 5.010 kg) against a weak 28 coil motor (weight just 5.010 kg) in a 7 year guarantee fan.
- ✓ Khaitan consumes merely 50 watts against 82 watts consumed by a 7 year guarantee fan. So you save more than the cost of the fan in electricity charges alone over 7 years.
- ✓ Khaitan delivers 4 1/4 cubic metres of air per unit per minute against a mere 3.01 cubic metres coming from a fan.
- ✓ Khaitan is backed by IASCO MID Centre recognised by the Government for 7 years.
- ✓ Khaitan is backed by IASCO MID Centre recognised by the Government for 7 years.
- ✓ Only Khaitan promises instant replacement within one year however minor the defect may be against a 7 year guarantee for repairing and/or changing of parts.

Khaitan is not for 7 years. It's for a life-time.



khaitan - the name is enough

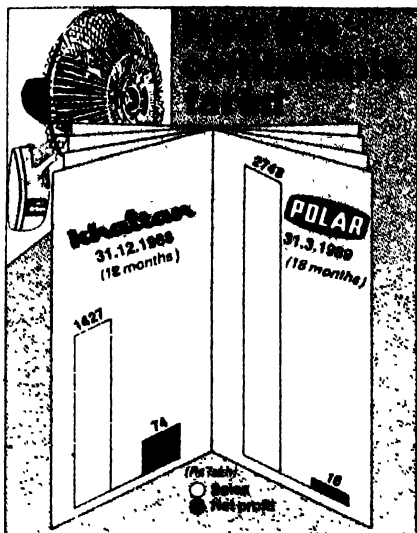
Why is Polar's guarantee period longer than Usha's, Orient's and Khaitan's put together?

Brand	Guarantee Period
Usha	1 year
Orient	1 year
Khaitan	1 year
Polar	7 years

Khaitan nursed its grievances and in April came out with a hit-back campaign which said that a fan with a seven-year guarantee would last for seven years only

argued for a ban on the Polar advertisement. Before the month was out, Polar's ad campaign was banned by the MRTPC. However, Polar maintained its stand and went in to appeal to the Calcutta High Court which stayed the ban. While it had made its point clear, Polar did not pursue its campaign.

Fan-makers have a long history of fighting it out in the media. In 1982, when Khaitan was a fledgling entrant in the fan industry, it advertised the greater virtues of using a "18 pole" motor. Khaitan had claimed that such a motor had 36 coils and hence this gave better quality. This had created such a stir in the market that even long established manufacturers like GEC, Crompton, Usha and Orient felt threatened and protested.



In a joint advertisement, Usha, Orient, GEC and Crompton Greaves cried out: "Ceiling fans. Don't be misled by distortions. Here is the complete story." Khaitan has travelled far since then, and has been able to dig in its feet firmly in the fan market.

Although the MRTPC had banned the February Polar ad, Khaitan nursed its grievances and came out with a hit-back advertisement in April saying that a fan with a seven-year guarantee would work only for seven years. On the other hand, a Khaitan fan would last a lifetime, the ad appeared to say. Rattled earlier by the MRTPC, Polar now went to the commission for redressal and sought an immediate ban on Khaitan's campaign. In his submission to the commission, the director general of investigations and registration, T.S.V. Panduranga Sarma, observed that Khaitan had admitted to the fact that the advertisement was released with Polar and its seven-year guarantee in mind. Sarma's submission further pointed out that Khaitan had taken the "law in its own hands" by mounting a campaign against Polar. It also observed that the company had "no business" in indulging in a "tit for tat" approach. MRTPC in turn banned the Khaitan ad and even initiated an investigation into their ad campaign.

The fan manufacturers admittedly have a difficult task ahead. The season for fan sales is limited to the summer. However, over the years the industry has proliferated and a whole host of new units have mushroomed all over the country. The established manufacturers cannot lay off their workers in the lean season and flog them during the peak season alone. The companies invariably accumulate large inventories and the cash flows are stretched. This explains the dog fight at the beginning of the

summer season.

The media fight apart, the companies had even fought battles behind the scenes. The company secretaries of Khaitan Fans and Polar International Ltd had exchanged letters in February making allegations and refuting them. Although the letters deal with technical points, they have nonetheless aroused amusement. Here is what one of the letters said: "Your statement gives the impression that you consider yourself to

be acknowledged peers in fan advertising and if you know the grammatical meaning of the word 'peers', it means 'equals' and hence we believe you consider us to be 'equal' to you in fan advertising. In such a situation, acquiring knowledge from 'equal level' sources is always appreciated and we hope you are trying to understand and learn from us." Logic has obviously not been forgotten in the heat of the battle!

Anjan Roy/New Delhi

ENFIELD ELECTRONICS

RPG makes a bid

R.P. Goenka attempts to strengthen his presence in south India

If matters have not quite gone the way he would have liked in eastern India, for some time now—the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation acquisition apart—Rama Prasad Goenka's determined push into the south is fast gaining momentum. The RPG Enterprises is putting up a Rs 800-crore petrochemical plant at Manali, north of Madras. Last year, the group assumed *de facto* control of the famous Spencer and Co. of Madras. And talks have been going on over the last few months to acquire the Madras-based, ailing Kothari General Foods Ltd floated by the Kotharis in collaboration with General Foods of the USA.

The latest southern target of the Goenkas is Enfield Electronics, the TV manufacturing company launched by the Enfield Group of Madras a few years ago. Enfield is a household name not only the south but also in many other parts of the country because of its rugged 350 cc motorcycle, the Bullet, which has served its users well for decades in cities as well as in the rural

areas. However, the Enfield name failed to work when it came to selling TV sets. As a result, the group has been on the look-out for a buyer to sell Enfield Electronics and cut its losses.

If market reports are to be believed, the Goenkas, with their finely-honed acquisition skills, were quick to line up for Enfield Electronics. Top Enfield executives who did not wish to be identified, said that for some time now, preliminary discussions had been going on between the Goenkas and the Enfield Group. The Goenkas have reportedly

The Enfield Group is keen to cut its losses by selling its TV unit. And the Goenkas with their finely-honed acquisition skills have been quick to line up for Enfield Electronics.



R.P. Goenka: southern ambitions

placed an order for 2,500 TV sets made by Enfield Electronics for "test marketing". And, depending on the public response, the Goenkas will get back for further discussions on a take-over, say the sources.

The Enfield Group seems to be quite keen to rid itself of a loss-making operation. Enfield Electronics was incorporated in early 1986 and made a marginal loss of Rs 1.58 lakhs in the first year of operations. The accounting period was then extended to 15 months ending 31 March, 1988. During this period, losses mounted to Rs 8.77 lakhs. Later figures are not available since the audited accounts for the year ending 31 March, 1989 have not been finalised yet. The fortunes of the company are understood to have worsened during this period but, observers point out, not to such an extent that an established group like Enfield needs to lower the lifeboats and send out distress signals.

On the other hand, it is not only the size of the losses which is the deciding factor. The installed capacity of Enfield Electronics is 48,000 black and white and colour television sets a year. In 1987-88, production totalled 13,224 BW and 8,802 CTV sets. And according to informed sources, things have not im-

proved much in 1988-89.

Lack of demand is stated to be one of the main reasons for the low utilisation of capacity. The TV market is already saturated and brands like the Madras-based Solidaire have gripped the imagination of the consuming public. The result is that Enfield has found the going tough. The Goenkas, according to hints thrown by the Enfield management, plan to use the Murphy brand name which they control, to market television sets made by Enfield Electronics. The company, with a share capital of Rs 92.65 lakhs and liabilities of Rs 98.07 lakhs, will be a fairly cheap acquisition for the Goenkas, if it comes through.

For, the market is also rife with rumours that the Goenkas have a rival in the race for Enfield Electronics. Indian Sewing Machine Company, which manufactures Singer sewing machines, is reported to be interested in taking over the TV company along with its liabilities. The Enfield management, however, denied that it has opened talks with Indian Sewing Machine. Knowing the uncertainties of the take-over game, the Goenkas may yet have to contend with strong competition.

R. Vijayaraghavan/Madras

heart in rats. "The bromine present in the oil is the toxic agent," she wrote.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), too, has warned against the use of this ingredient. In its Codex Guide (CAC/FAN-55-79), WHO has classified BVO as a C-I additive which means that it is unsafe for food items. Unfortunately, WHO's directions are not binding on member nations. Points out O.P. Gera, deputy director in the Food and Nutrition Board, while BVO has been banned in 129 countries, India has yet to do so.

Soft drink manufacturers themselves admit that they use BVO in their products. According to V.R. Acharya, R&D manager, Parle Exports, Limca, made by them contains the carcinogenic ingredient. He points out that the "govern-

The popular Limca and Gold Spot cold drinks: a health hazard



SOFT DRINKS

Beware of the bottle

Citrus-flavoured cold drinks contain the carcinogenic brominated vegetable oil which has been banned in 129 countries

A picturesque beach meeting a cerulean blue sea, a motorboat with pretty women and well-groomed men having a fun-filled time. The message—whether the medium is an upmarket glossy or the small screen—is obvious: part of the good life is to be found in a bottle of soft drink, ice-cool and fizzy. But pause a little the next time you decide to gulp down your favourite cold drink: many of them are actually harmful for your health. Studies have shown that soft drinks like Limca, Gold Spot, Campa Orange, Tripp and Rush may be carcinogenic. The reason: the use of brominated vegetable oil (BVO) in the manufacture of citrus-flavoured cold drinks.

As early as 1976, Thankamma Jacob, a member of the Food Additives Subcommittee of the Central Committee on Food Standards, had pointed out in her

book, *Food Adulteration*, that BVO used in citrus-flavoured aerated drinks was carcinogenic and caused growth retardation, anaemia and an enlargement of the

Limca, Gold Spot, Campa Orange, Tripp and Rush may be carcinogenic. The reason: the use of BVO in the manufacture of citrus-flavoured drinks

ment of India, as a precautionary measure, has taken into consideration the need to restrict BVO in soft drinks but has so far not banned it in India." He also adds that "BVO had some effect on experimental animals, but it has not been conclusively proved that the product is carcinogenic."

But, apparently, the government did ban the use of BVO in soft drinks at one time. The department of health amended the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules on 15 April, 1988 to totally ban the use of BVO.

But why are soft drink manufacturers so keen on using BVO? This ingredient serves as an "emulsifying" or cloud stabilising agent" in citrus-flavoured soft drinks. BVO allows the various ingredients which add flavour and colour to

the soft drinks to mix properly with the water. The continued use of BVO is especially surprising because the Food Additives Subcommittee had suggested the use of estergum as an alternative clouding agent for two years. The subcommittee stated on 4 July, 1988, that soft drink manufacturers would have to prove that estergum did not have any harmful side-effects.

Meanwhile, CUTS has taken up the battle to ban the use of BVO and has complained to the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in New Delhi about the continuing use of BVO in citrus-flavoured soft drinks. A decision is expected soon. And if BVO is finally banned, the good life will only become a safer one.

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta

BANKS

The amalgamation option

The moratorium-bound United Industrial Bank is likely to be merged with Allahabad Bank

A saviour has finally been found for the ailing, Calcutta-headquartered United Industrial Bank (UIB). After a tantalising fortnight—during which hapless depositors had queued up before the bank's branches and the employees wondered about their future—reports have filtered through that the Calcutta-headquartered, nationalised Allahabad Bank will take over UIB. While there is relief all around, it took this one small bank (deposits: Rs 300 crores) to explode the myth of private sector efficiency as well as reveal the slackness in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) operations and monitoring standards.

The bombshell came early last month when RBI put the private sector bank on

a four-month moratorium, starting 10 June, under Section 45 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, leaving the depositors in a quandary about their money. The confusion was best echoed in the statement made by the bank's chairman, K.C. Chakreberti, "I sincerely do not know why the moratorium was imposed."

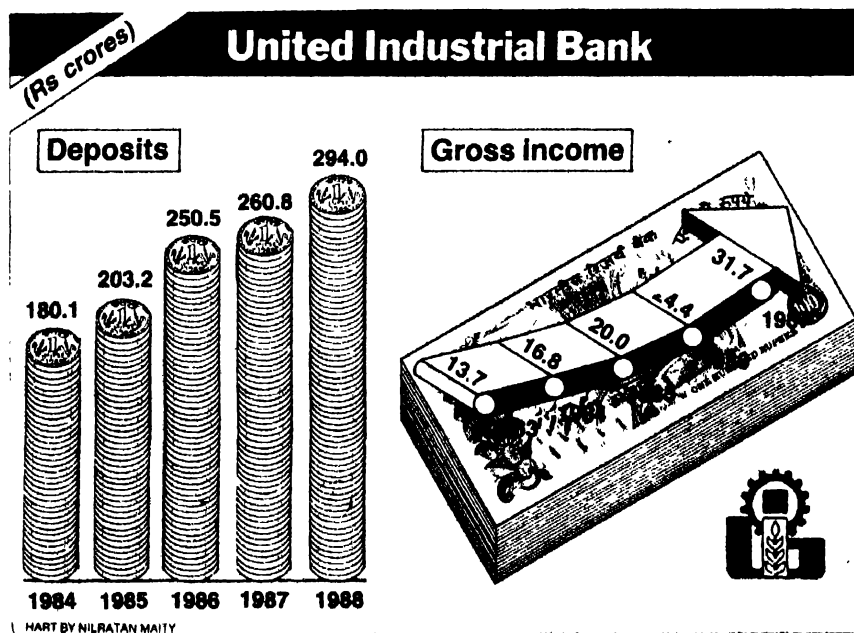
But the writing on the wall was clear. UIB had been teetering on the brink of a crisis for years and a rescue act was long overdue. However, what took everybody by surprise was the suddenness of the move. What was even more amazing was the smugness with which RBI decided to impose a moratorium—a rignmarole replete with confusion and

speculation—25 years after it was last enforced in West Bengal.

"A merger scheme could have been announced straightaway. That would have saved a lot of people a lot of trouble," feels S.R. Sengupta, president of the All India Bank Officers Confederation (AIBOC). That the bank was 'sick' was beyond doubt, but AIBOC office-bearers and bank professionals aver that preventive action at an earlier stage could have avoided the amalgamation option. For a bank which has weathered a world war, partition, famines, droughts, floods and even take-over threats, the merger seems to be a sad ending.

The bank was started by the Roy family of Bhagyakul, in erstwhile East Pakistan, in May 1940, to get around the Bengal Moneylenders Act of 1938 which abolished casual usury. Growth was slow; by 1963-64, deposits were a meagre Rs 2.5 to 3 crores. Around the same time, four small West Bengal private banks—Metropolitan Bank, Southern Bank, Bank of Bankura and Prabartak Bank—were merged with UIB at RBI's behest. Even so, growth remained slow. By 1968, deposits had

Old UIB clients and employees are not happy with the turn of events as they feel that a merger with Allahabad Bank will only obliterate the bank's identity



increased marginally to touch Rs 4 crores, while accumulated losses reached Rs 10 lakhs.

In 1969, the bank got a full-time executive chairman, N.L. Chatterjee, who was formerly with the United Bank of India. Around the same time, J.N. Biswas, who had earlier joined from the Industrial Finance Corporation of India, became the general manager. The bank's downward journey began in 1974 when Chatterjee retired, leaving in his wake a series of succession wrangles.

UIB was topless for two years following a take-over bid by the United Bank of India, which had built up a considerable stake in the bank. The issue was finally resolved with RBI's intervention. And

J.N. Biswas finally took over the reins of UIB in 1976, going on to stay for 11 years—a tenure full of controversy.

"The genesis of the bank's decline lies in Biswas' term, when extra-commercial considerations were given the upper hand for sanctioning loans," AIBOC officials explain. They even point to his unusually long tenure as an irreversible indicator of the special favours that Biswas reportedly granted to the RBI nominated members on the UIB board.

In fact, what pushed the bank to the brink of disaster was the large number of advances which became sticky. RBI officials, who prefer to remain any-



J.N. Biswas: controversial role



The foyer of United Industrial Bank's head office: uncertain future

mous, state that around 50 per cent of the bank's advance portfolio had turned non-performing. AIBOC sources also refer to an RBI enquiry instituted in 1980 which clearly mentioned the growing number of sticky advances in UIB.

However, Biswas contests all these claims and says that "the 1980 enquiry was instituted to investigate a fraud committed on our Bombay branch. The subsequent enquiries, of which nobody talks, ultimately exonerated the bank management."

In the melee of accusations and counter-accusations, what comes through clearly—and everyone is unanimous about this—is the questionable role of the RBI nominated directors as well as

those of United Bank on the board. In fact, United Bank holds a 42 per cent stake in UIB.

"We are talking of nationalisation now. But UIB was always a quasi-nationalised bank since United Bank's stake constituted almost 50 per cent of the shareholding while 20 per cent of the equity capital located in Bangladesh is untraceable," AIBOC's Sengupta said.

He goes on to point out a number of doubtful advances—Vishwanath Cashew involving Rs 1.25 crores, Tikmani group Rs 3 crores, Midnapore Ceramics Rs 1 crore and Sukanta Electronics involving Rs 2 crores—which escaped scrutiny of the board members. The other reasons attributed for UIB's decline are poor staff selection and training, improper supervision of loans and assets, and the high rate of RBI statutory ratios which were not in line with the size of the bank's business.

The downside of the bank also reflected in the response to the recently announced rights issue by UIB to raise its equity capital to Rs 5 crores from the present level of Rs 29.24 lakhs. Save a few of the old guard and former employees, no subscription has been forthcoming, not even from United Bank.

Old UIB clients and employees are not happy with the turn of events as they feel that a merger with Allahabad Bank will only obliterate the bank's identity. "UIB has been there for around 50 years and it had become a habit with many Bengali middle-class families. Wiping out the identity of such an old bank will do more harm than good," they complain. RBI has, however, given the assurance that it will protect the depositors' money at all costs. What intrigues everybody is whether such mergers are also the true panacea for the sticky-loan-afflicted banks.

"When private sector banks constitute only 4 per cent of the total banking deposits, why does the RBI not merge or nationalise all these banks at a stroke instead of doing it in a piecemeal fashion?" asks Sengupta. But then, such an approach has to contend with the bureaucratic approach of RBI and its hush-hush attitude.

While Allahabad Bank's name has been recommended by RBI to take over the ailing UIB, the final decision rests with the Union government. Considering that both the banks are in West Bengal, one cannot rule out the possibility of North Block mandarins making political capital out of the issue. It will be a short wait before the future of UIB is finally known—till 10 October when the moratorium period expires.

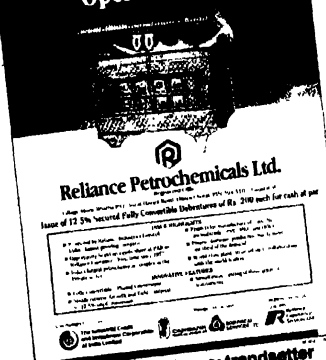
Rajrishi Singhal/Calcutta

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An issue of brandname

After the huge success of Reliance Petrochemicals' Rs 600-crore 'Khazana' debenture issue last year—the largest ever in India—marketing a public issue under a brandname became the in-thing. The brainchild of Anil Ambani, Khazana was marketed by Mudra Communications. Mudra followed this up with 'Deepak

Your Family's Khazana Opens Today.



Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd.

Large Scale Public Issue of Rs 190 Crore (Rs 19000 Crore) of 12 1/2% Secured Fully Convertible Debentures of Rs 200 each for cash at par

Key Features:

- 1. A convertible debenture, convertible into equity shares of Rs 10 each at the option of the holder.
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The Khazana issue: trendsetter

Mahadhan', the Rs 190-crore debenture issue of Deepak Fertiliser, and ran away with another success. But then, branding a public issue does not work in all cases. After all, there are not many people who have as close an understanding of the capital

market as Dhirubhai Ambani has. Super Sales went to the market with its 'Lakshmi Vardhaan' issue while Usha Rectifiers tried to cash in on the trend by touting its 'Usha Lakshmi' public issue. And there was 'Shubhlabb' from Hindustan Alloys. Unfortunately for these companies, their brands did not prove to be the *khazanas* they were expected to be. Perhaps it needs a Mudra to make a success of brandname public issues? The answer will be known—soon. For the agency is gearing up to launch the Rs 103.75-crore partly convertible issue for Apollo Tyres under the name 'Swar-naganga'.

Pivoting an auto move

It was a crazy—and perhaps unrealistic in the Indian context—move to begin with. The Union surface ministry was for some time toying with the idea of amending the Motor Vehicles Act to ban automobiles from the road after they had crossed a 15-year age limit. Protests were building up all around. What would happen to the thriving second-hand car market in the country? What about the dreams of so many thousands of middle-class Indians whose only chance of having a car of their own was by purchasing a second-hand tin box? Even more, what about the

fact that an overwhelming majority of those who could afford to buy a shining new automobile could do so only once in their lifetime?

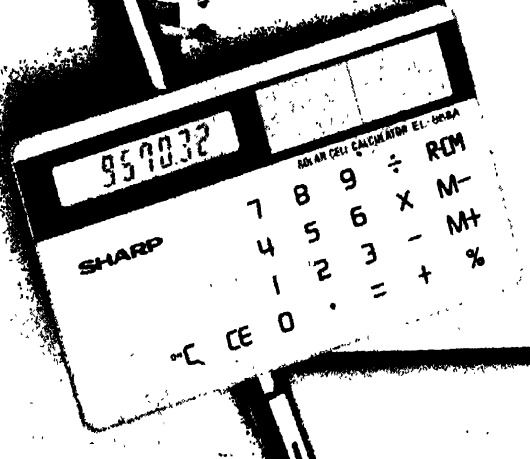
Mercifully, Rajesh Pilot realised the impractical, and even foolhardy, move that his ministry had initiated. In a quick about-turn last week, Pilot announced that the government had decided to keep in abeyance the move to fix an age limit for vehicles.

Clarion loses Ray

Clarion Advertising Services just seems to be unable to stem the rot. The trouble began at the end of last year when former managing director Chris Passanah quit the agency. And a month ago, Clarion was delivered a body blow when its Delhi office chief, Sudhir Lal, quit to set up Mega Corp, taking away the hefty Indodan coffee account in the bargain.

In the latest setback the agency has suffered, Clarion has lost its most prestigious asset: Satyajit Ray, who has been a director on the agency's board for long. Ray, who sent in his resignation last week, apparently did not specify any reason for his sudden decision. But advertising circles aver that the film director was unhappy with events in Clarion. But this is one loss that the agency cannot afford. After all, given the ways of Mandi House—TV advertising has become all too important in recent times—issues can often be clinched by selling the name of Satyajit Ray.

Rajesh Pilot: strange thinking



SURJIT S. BHALLA

Calling people names

That's how Rajiv Gandhi plans to win the next election

The electoral strategy of Rajiv Gandhi is becoming clear. And as it does, it tells us more about his weaknesses than his strengths. So without doing a poll, but listening to Rajiv Gandhi's speeches, the Opposition can find out what the Prime Minister regards as his Achilles' heel—his pro-western, pro-rich image.

How? By noting that in the back pages of a newspaper was a story headlined "VP Singh refutes PM's charge over Super 301". Perhaps, this 'charge' was broadcast over Doordarshan as well. By alleging falsely that the Opposition had not condemned the Super 301 resolution, Rajiv was trying to portray it as being 'pro-West'—a charge that has often been directed at him and his regime. This seems to be his tactic for 'campaign '89'.

An alternate electoral strategy would be to ignore the weaknesses and concentrate instead on the achievements of Rajiv Gandhi's government. Unfortunately for the Congress, there are hardly any good deeds to dwell upon. A progressive electoral stance on a major deprived sector of the population—the women? Possible, but then there is the regressive decision on the Muslim Women's Bill. Communalism? Nothing positive to base a campaign on except in a blatantly pro-communal fashion, as in the last election. National leadership in terms of national unity? Agitations are now the norm in all the states and the Punjab problem is today graver than ever before. Foreign affairs? Gone are the days when India provided moral and political leadership to the Third World; it is now more of a regional bully. A fact that has meant a loss of face with our neighbours and the world. Political reforms? Yes, in the form of the cynical introduction of the Panchayati Raj Bill. And then there is the threat of reintroduction of the Defamation Bill any time the going gets rough. Economic reforms? What reforms? Reforms that favour industrialists and preserve the discretionary power of the bureaucrats at the expense of

entrepreneurs and workers who have learnt to earn their incomes the hard way—by working? Reforms that ensure project approvals for only those who toe the party line—or else their editors get fired?

No matter how one looks at it, the Rajiv regime does not have much to boast about. His advisers know this—hence the concern about the forthcoming campaign

the Super 301 resolution? That is irrelevant—Goebbelspeak is with us. And the essence of negative campaigning—didn't you follow the US elections?—is that all one has to do is to repeat the lies *ad nauseam*, and it helps if the broadcast media and large sections of the print media are with you. Who will be able to differentiate between false charges and the truth? If the literate Americans did not care, why should the illiterate Indians?

And as for the second criticism directed at Rajiv Gandhi—a pro-rich stance—the government has of late taken steps to offset it. Employment programmes, sari schemes and even a throwback to a western cliché of the Sixties: 'power to the people'. It is a well-known fact about so-called democracies that an election year spells bonanzas and promises (maybe insincere). And to prove its intentions, the Congress has taken to falsely accusing the Opposition of being anti-poor. (PM, incredulously: "You

know, the tribals were charged 20 paise more for their rice in Andhra Pradesh?" Honest adviser: "But sir, all states charge a small margin above the price charged by the Centre." PM: "Do not confuse me with facts—my propaganda is made up.")

Maybe Bush-style negative campaigning (how western can you get?) will cover up the accumulated failures. No analysis suggests that the vast majority of India—the poor—has become significantly better off with 40 years of Nehru-Indira Gandhi-Rajiv Gandhi policies. Indeed, most analyses suggest that our record of poverty alleviation is amongst the worst in the developing world. Maybe the lesson is that the Indian polity only responds to *nasbandi*. And that political and economic intimidation are viewed with benign neglect. Only October-November 1989 will tell whether the Indian democratic infant is growing up.

The author, an economist, is a Senior Fellow of New Delhi's The Policy Group.



Rajiv Gandhi: attacking the Opposition is his electoral strategy

Negative campaigning—the new buzz-word of the Congress(I)—was made respectable in America (so why won't it work here, argue Rajiv's advisers). And the issues being highlighted are Rajiv's very own drawbacks: his western orientation (complete with Gucci shoes and sweatshirt attire) and his pro-rich stance (including Bofors, swimming pools and marble tiles).

It is the first handicap that gives the clue to the Super 301 mystery. But first, what is Super 301? It is not a computer, but rather a plan by the US administration to pressurise Japan, Brazil and India to change their foreign investment policies. If so, then what is its electoral relevance in a country where poverty is the norm and a majority of the population is illiterate? Why, there is tremendous relevance, argue Rajiv's whiz-kids. For, by criticising the Opposition for its failure to denounce Super 301, you can paint it (rather than yourself) as being pro-western and anti-national. But what if the Opposition has already condemned

When it comes to versatility, there's no beating Meenakshi Seshadri. First, there was the song she recorded for Sohanlal Kanwar's *Tadap*. And then, to do one better than the Rekhas of the world, she choreographed the number too. Keeping up the good work, Seshadri did the dance direction for a song in Firoz Nadiadwalla's *Ghar Ho To Aisa*, which was picturised on Anil Kapoor, Kader Khan, Bindu, Saeed Jaffrey and Meenakshi herself.

At least one thing is clear. The ice-maiden will have no problems occupying herself during an early retirement, should the likes of Madhuri Dixit throw her out of business.

Meenakshi Seshadri: versatile talent



N. PRASAD

Kamalahasan has acquired a new admirer—the Tamil Nadu chief minister. After watching a special show of the actor's latest film *Apoorva Sahodarakal*, Karunanidhi shot off a letter to Kamal: "An unusual actor has performed exquisitely. *Apoorva Sahodarakal* is an unusual poem. Oh artistry, your name is Kamalahasan."

The film, in which Kamal plays a triple role—of a police officer and his two sons, one a car mechanic and the other a midget—was also screened for the President,



Madhuri Dixit: out of the running

R. Venkataraman, who later presented the actor with a shawl as a token of his appreciation.

So they all lost out—Rekha, Meenakshi, Madhuri, and several others besides. And, to add to their ignominy, it was a US-based unknown, Nikita, who pipped them at the post.

It now transpires that the lead role in *Pamella, The Beauty Queen*, the film on the life and loves of Pamella Bordes, has been cast, and none of the Indian contenders have got a look in. Nikita, apparently, managed to swing the deal because of her height and the slight facial resemblance she bears to the former Miss India.

One had heard of shotgun weddings but this was an entirely new one. Anuradha

Kamalahasan: admirers all



N. PRASAD

Paudwal found three unidentified men bursting into her house some days ago, demanding that the dulcet-toned lady participate in an entertainment programme

they were organising in Sholapur. When the singer declined, the men pulled out three knives and a revolver, and threatened to kill her if she didn't fall in with their wishes. Only to flee once Anuradha's parents-in-law raised an alarm.

It was the primary rule of the Kapoor *khandaan*. None of their women were ever to feature in films (you know how these lecherous industry types are, don't you?). But the times, they are a changing, and the Kapoor girls have begun venturing into the big, bad world of Hindi cinema. First, it was Sanjana (daughter of Shashi Kapoor), who made her debut (disastrous though it later turned out to be) in *Hero Hiralal*. And now it seems that Karishma, the daughter of Randhir and Babita, will be following suit, in the near future. ■



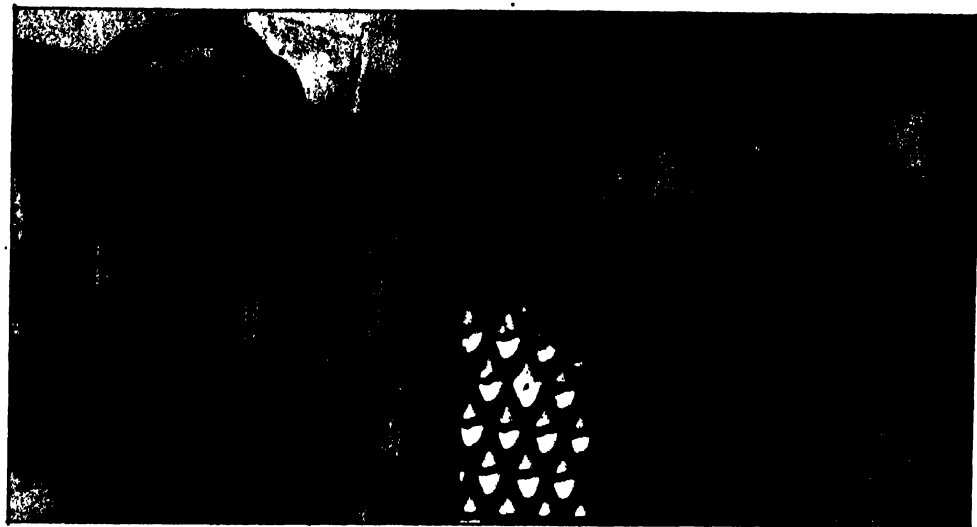
Rekha: lost out

On Yale and Quayle

● It was a major diplomatic triumph. At the White House dinner hosted in her honour, Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto informed those assembled that her years at Harvard had taught her that Yale produced no charming men. But she was "glad" to have "met the only one". While President Bush preened at this compliment all of America appeared floored.

But the Prime Minister's witticisms at the expense of vice-president Dan Quayle went down less well. Taking off on an apocryphal story doing the rounds in Washington that Quayle had been trying to brush up his Latin before visiting Latin America, Bhutto jocularly informed the vice-president that "they spoke Urdu in Pakistan."

Benazir Bhutto:
witticisms
galore



Ayesha Dharker in *Manika, The Girl Who Lived Twice*: toast of all Paris

Scene-stealer

● It isn't easy emerging from the shadows of celebrity parents. But Ayesha, daughter of Anil (editor *Mid-day*) and Imtiaz Dharker (of *Purdah* fame), seems to be managing fine.

Ayesha, who starred in the title role in *Manika, The Girl Who Lived Twice*, was the toast of all Paris when

her debut film won an award in the Popular Prize category at the Cannes Film Festival. The 12-year-old student of J.B. Petit School in Bombay was invited on TV talk shows, addressed conferences, and as proud mother Imtiaz Dharker discloses, "loved every moment of it".

It all began when the film's casting director

thought Ayesha "looked right" for the role, and sent her photographs to the company's production department in London and Paris. An audition followed and young Dharker, with a little coaching from mama, walked away with the role.

And after the Festival, with the accolades, as well.

On, off and on again

● As on and off affairs go, this one is surely the most intriguing.

Eyebrows had been raised even when Vinod Khanna first began dating Amrita Singh. (Remember Sonu Walia's famous dig: "I didn't 'I didn't know Vinod was gay'.") But oblivious to all such bitching, the lovers continued to see each other,

finally announcing their engagement.

And then they fell out. Nobody knows quite why, though speculation abounds. But the latest is that the two are together again, going into that old kootchie-koo routine, as though nothing had

ever gone wrong. There's no talk of marriage as yet, but, no doubt, that's only a matter of time.

Vinod and Amrita: together again



Better luck this time?

● Mrinal Sen's latest film *Ek Din Achanak* continues to make waves. Soon after the movie featured among the National Award winners, comes the news that it has been chosen as the Indian entry in the competitive section of the forthcoming Venice Film Festival.

The film which stars Shreeram Lagoo, Shabana Azmi, Rupa Ganguly, and Aparna Sen in a



Mrinal Sen: In the running

cameo role, deals with an old Mrinal Sen preoccupation—the theme of waiting. As in *Ek Din Pratidin*, one member of the family, the father in this case, doesn't come back home. This sets off a process of introspection, with everyone trying to arrive at

the cause of his disappearance.

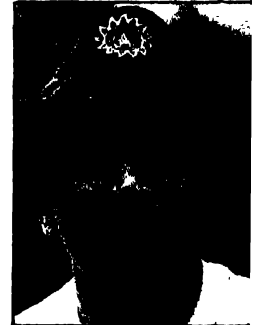
Sen hasn't been too successful at international events—with only a solitary Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival to his credit. But maybe he'll have better luck this time.

Editor Imran

● A new cricket magazine has hit the stands in England. And what makes *Cricket Life* special is that it is edited by Pakistani sex symbol Imran Khan.

The 68-page inaugural issue should be of special interest to Indians—the former Pakistani test captain has ensured the coverage of the recently concluded West Indies tour and the controversial stop-over by the team at the United States. The magazine with a print run of 50,000 copies will be circulated in all cricket playing countries, including such recent converts to the game as America and the Middle Eastern states.

Maybe it's Khan's charisma that has done it, but the management has managed to rope in Sunil Gavaskar, Chris Cowdrey, Ian Chappell, Michael Holding to man the magazine's editorial board. And in his usual go-getting style Gavaskar has managed to squeeze in an article in the inaugural issue itself.



Sunil Gavaskar: on the editorial board



Lizzy: fortunate escape

A narrow escape

● What makes the heroines down south so prone to suicide attempts? While nobody seems to have the answer to that one, this propensity very nearly

claimed another victim. Lizzy (23), leading lady of Tamil and Malayalam films popped 15 sleeping pills, some days back, and woke up to find herself in a Madras hospital.

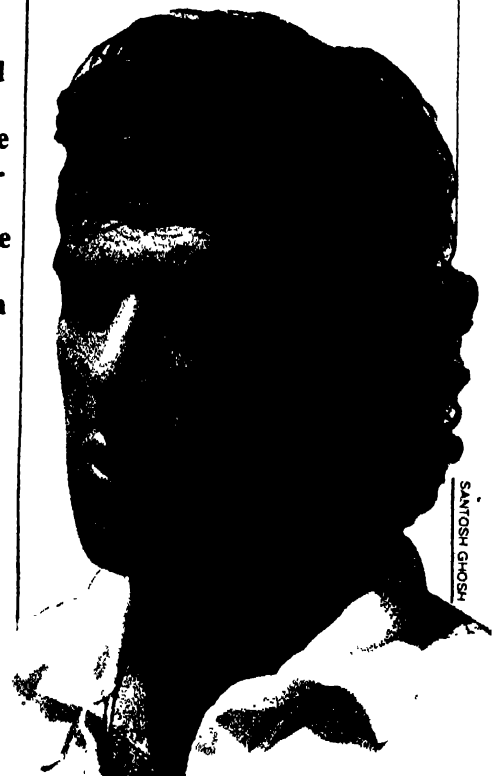
The desperate act was sparked off by an unhappy love affair. And strangely enough, it was the actress's mother who was the villain of the piece.

Lizzy was, evidently, deeply in love with Priyadarshan, a top director of Malayam films, and wished to marry him. But this, say insiders, was not acceptable to her mother, who wasn't having her meal ticket walk away.

So, the report goes, she wrote to Priyadarshan, listing all her daughter's ex-lovers, and he, in the best traditions of Indian manhood, dropped his girlfriend.

Fortunately for Lizzy, her bid didn't quite come off and she is currently recuperating in bed, hoping, no doubt, that this, at least, will bring back lover boy to her side.

Imran Khan: Into journalism



SANTOSH GHOSH

Cut and paste

The routine has served collage artist V. Balu well

His collage *Diwali Lamps* appeared on the United Nations International Childrens Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) greeting cards during the International Year of Peace. His works have been auctioned to raise funds for international causes by the UN art guild and UN women's organisations. Institutions such as Max Mueller Bhavan and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations sponsor his exhibitions. *Span* magazine has featured his collages on the cover. Peace is the abiding theme of V. Balu's art, giving his creations an additional significance in today's troubled world.

Balu works in paper—painstakingly piecing together bits of it to fashion beautiful pictures, some naturalistic portraits, some abstract images, all conveying the idea of peace. Says the artist: "To me peace is the most important need of humankind. It is not an abstract thought, but a positive presence, a positive experience. To me the subject manifests itself in almost every aspect of living."

Well, it certainly manifests itself in every collage of Balu's which strives to celebrate the concept by portraying it in 'living forms'. His *Celebration Of Peace*, for instance, made of more than 3,000 bits of paper, cut and pasted together, creates the effect of candles, fireworks, flames, light. *The Melody Of Peace* has the harmony of good music. *The Pulsation of Peace*, made entirely from chocolate wrapping paper undulates with changing patterns as the observer walking past is reflected on each piece of wrapper.

Balu works at portraits too. His figures are very pleasing to the eye, and generally those of great spiritual leaders of the world—Jesus Christ, Gautam Buddha, Bahubali, and various Indian gurus. The texture of the material goes a long way in making these collages

come alive. As Balu says: "The advance in printing technology makes so many varieties of paper available in so many colours."

Most of Balu's works on peace are done in subtle shades of blue. But the artist excels in the use of primary colours on the occasions that he chooses to use them. Here the magazine boom has been of some use to the artist. These days, there are more glossies in the market than ever before and the paper quality and the gorgeous colours

of these publications make Balu's work that much easier

Though he has acquired fame through his collages, this wasn't how Balu began his career in art. He started off as a cartoonist in Shankar's weekly. His job at the Indian Coffee Board (where he worked as a senior executive in market promotion) didn't allow for a fulltime career in art, but nonetheless, Balu made time for his hobby—collage making. Trips abroad, gathering information and experience, and imbibing the lessons taught by foreign artists helped his skills mature. Balu also began working at home, in a small studio, which he shared with his artist wife Shakuntala Balu, until her death a year ago.

It's only after his retirement from his job at the Indian Coffee Board, though, that Balu's artistic genius flowered fully. Now he could devote himself to his collages without any other distractions. And Balu made the most of the opportunity. Peace which had always been a prevalent theme in his work, became even more pronounced. Says Balu: "I was becoming interested in the peace theme since 1981 itself. But in 1986, the International Year of Peace, I decided that this should be my predominant theme."

Though the artist has been at it for the past 30 years, his enthusiasm hasn't waned one bit. At present, Balu is working on a collage made up of 7,000 pieces of paper, and at organising exhibitions of his work in America and Europe. Also on the agenda are articles written with the aim of popularising his medium of work in the country, and a book which will make the knowledge of collage-making easily accessible to the general public. Balu regrets that the art has not gained ground in India: "It is a craft where scissors draw the lines and papers paint the colours." If only you have the patience to cut and paste.

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore



Balu and (above) his collage, *Heralding The Era: peace is an abiding theme*

The Arora case

Indu still denies killing her children

It was a crime that shocked the nation. On 24 June, 1988, two children, Sunny (6) and Shikha (3) were burned to death. Just before he died, however, Sunny managed to tell the police who had done it: "Ajit uncle *ne jalaaya hai*." The reference was to Ajit Seth, who lived near the boy's parents, Indu and Harish Arora, in the middle class Delhi colony of Paschim Vihar.

First reports had both parents grieving: newspapers carried pictures of Harish and Indu clutching each other sorrowfully at the funeral. Then, after the police traced Ajit Seth and interrogated him, a different story emerged. Seth said that the murder had been Indu Arora's idea. They were lovers, he claimed, and she had wanted her children murdered.

As the police probed deeper, they found evidence that Seth and Indu had conducted an affair since mid-1986. There were records of trysts at hotels under false names and Harish Arora confirmed that Indu's affair had been the source of considerable tension in the household. Once this was established, the police wasted no time in arresting Indu and charging her (along with Seth) with the murder of her children.

It was the arrest that set off the outrage. What kind of mother would ask her paramour to burn her own children? Could anything more reprehensible be conceived of?

The outrage spread quickly. When Indu appeared at Delhi's Tees Hazari courts on 29 June, a crowd of 5,000 shouted slogans against her. Amongst those picketing the court was Harish Arora who was now convinced of his wife's guilt.

Indu was refused bail. Her lawyer argued that the only evidence against her was the word of a self-confessed murderer, but Jaspal Singh, additional district and sessions judge, decided that the time had come for some good, old fashioned moralising: "Kinky sex goes to the head. It sometimes even dries the milk of human kindness...Here is a woman whose flesh games were unsatiated..."

For most of north India, Indu's sexual morality was evidence enough of murder.

A year later, the case has still to be decided. Indu found that most judges took the Jaspal Singh line, and were unwilling to grant her bail. Finally, in November 1988, she secured a release on bail from Tihar Jail and returned to her parents' house in Sarvapriya Vihar.

Now, she lives quietly with her parents, seemingly in a daze most of the time. Her marriage is over and she has lost contact with most of her friends. When neighbours drop in, she prefers not to see them and remains in her bedroom. She says that ever since society branded her as a child murderer she has lost all sense of belonging. Her only contact with the outside world comes from the Hindi magazines she reads incessantly.

Her story still hasn't changed. She

maintains that she is innocent and that the entire case is a frame-up. She denies also that she ever had an affair with Ajit Seth. "We were only good friends" she says. "There was no affair. He used to come to my rescue every time I had a fight with my husband. That's all."

Indu's position is that everything is a blur. "I am still trying to find out what happened. The loss of my children, the arrest, the crowd at the court...I can't understand any of it." She says she grieves for her children and spends much of her time thinking about them.

Her lawyers seem to think that she has a good case. The police have yet to establish motive—even if she was having an affair with Seth, what did she have to gain from the murder of her children? Furthermore, the police evidence is circumstantial: a witness saw Indu talking



Indu Arora being taken into police custody: a miscarriage of justice?

"I never had an affair with Ajit," Indu Arora maintains. "We were only good friends. He used to come to my rescue when I had fights with my husband"

to Seth half an hour before the children were killed, other witnesses attest to the affair, etc. None of this is necessarily conclusive.

However, should Ajit Seth implicate her in court (confessions to the police are inadmissible as evidence), then the prosecution's case will be much stronger. (Though Indu's lawyer, of course, will say that Seth is lying.)

The tragedy is that even if she wins an acquittal in the courts, society has already convicted her. To most of India, she is the immoral woman who killed her own children.

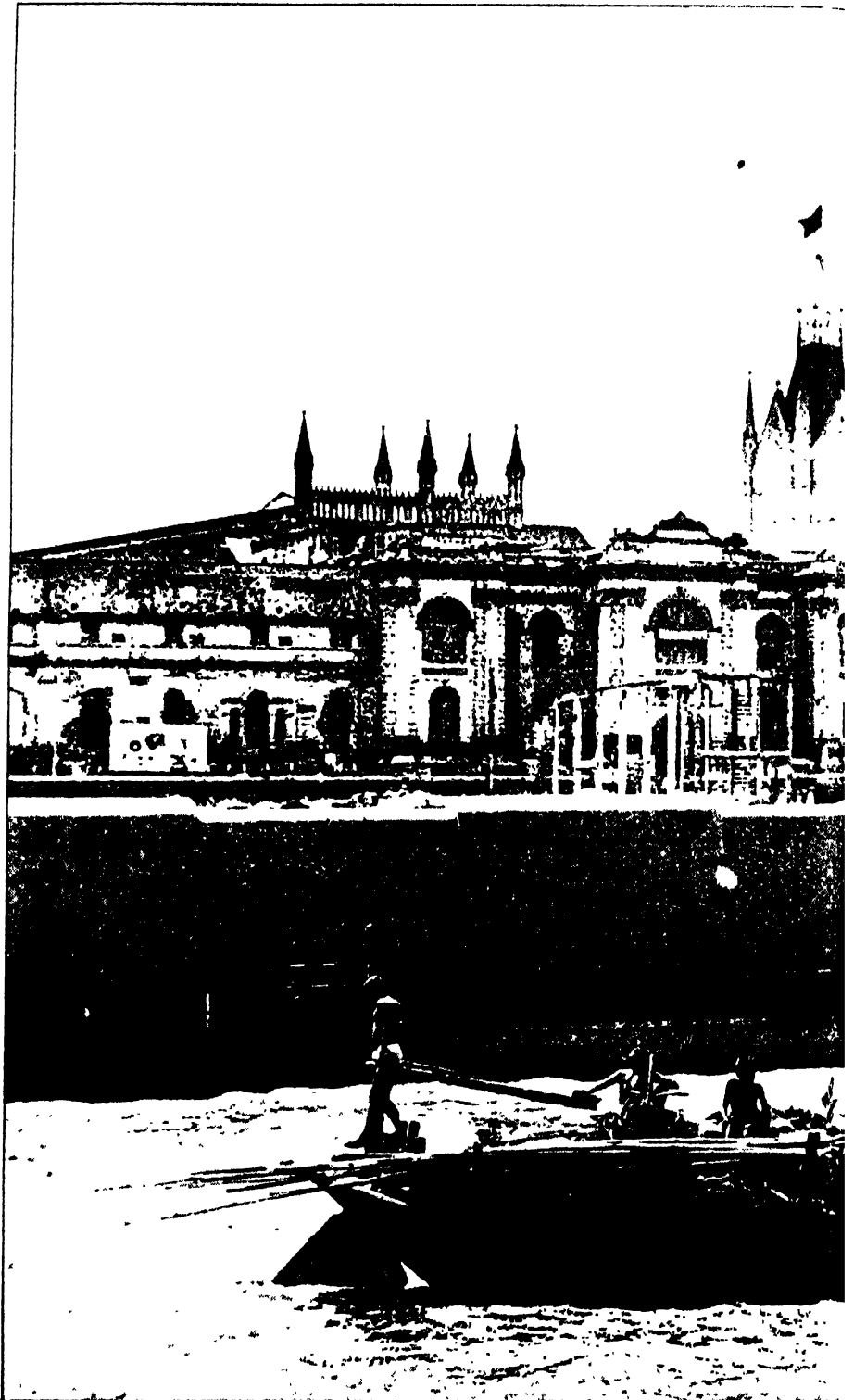
Alka Saxena/New Delhi

THE MIRACLE

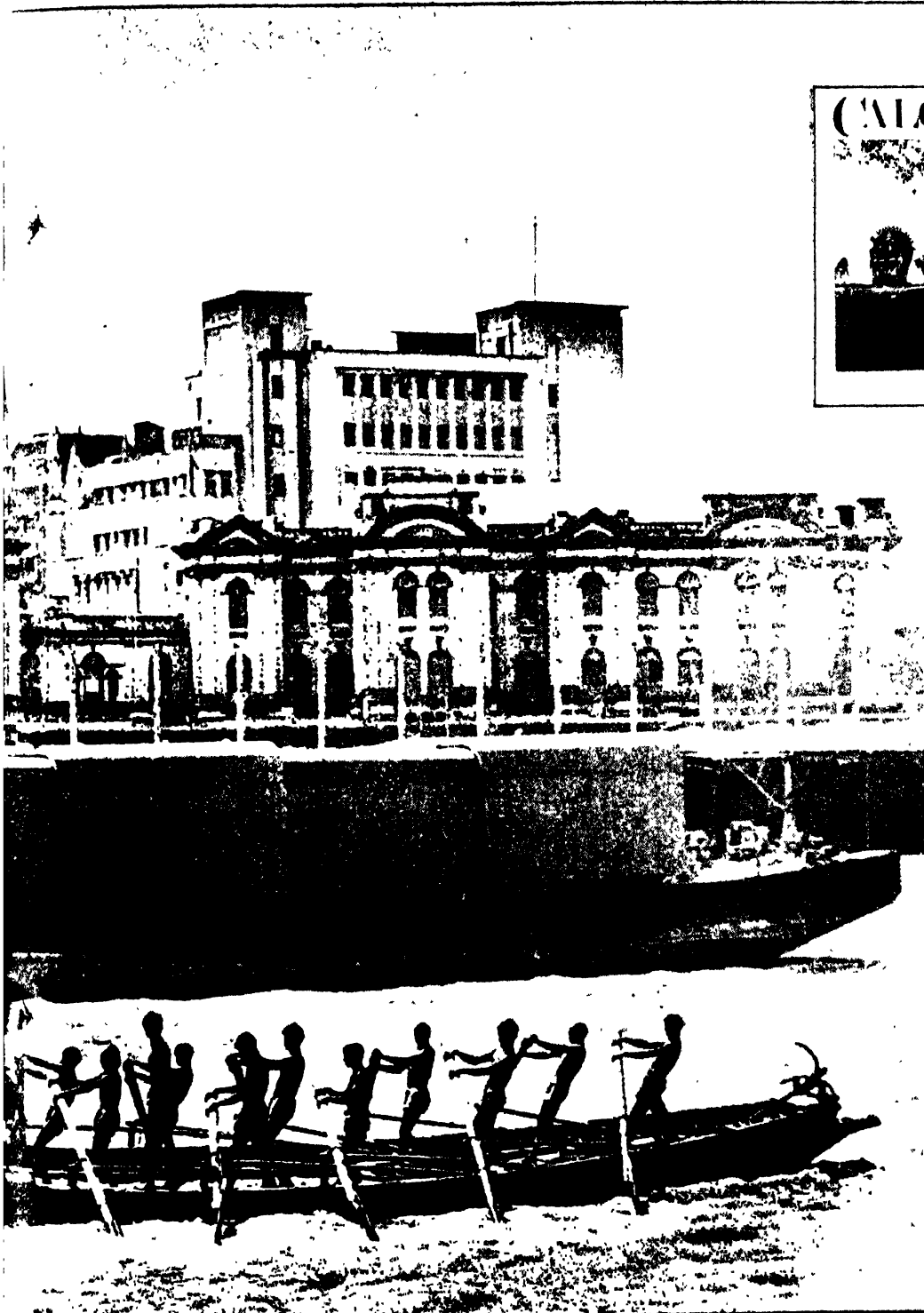
Photographer Raghu Rai discovers the life in a city that many have described as a necropolis. Author Dominique Lapierre provides the text

Ah Calcutta, burdened with the stigma of despair! Ah Calcutta, reviled as the greatest urban disaster on this planet, a hell on earth. Ah Calcutta, even the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, called you a dying city. Ah Calcutta, the graffiti on your walls confirm that no hope is left, only anger. Ah Calcutta, you are named after the goddess Kali, the symbol of fear and death. Ah Calcutta, in their thirst for justice millions of your children have finally embraced communism's promises of salvation. The horrified expression on the face of the American tourist I see coming out of the Grand Hotel, the local palace with its palm-fringed swimming pool, mirrors the truth of many of these accusations.

But what was this stranger able to see of Calcutta, before getting back into her air-conditioned taxi, which in a few minutes would take her to her plane bound for New York? At worst a gigantic slum and at best Dante's mulling crowds in a Tennessee Williams stage set. In other words, she probably saw the usual clichés. That is perfectly understandable: Calcutta does not easily shed its horrors. You will need courage and perseverance if you want to attempt the adventure of getting to know Calcutta. But should you succeed, prepare yourself for a shock, because what you will discover is the exact opposite of what you dreaded. You expected death, yet you find life. LIFE in capital letters. Pulsating life, swirling, thrilling, trembling—vibrant as nowhere else in the world. Life is everywhere, it reigns and commands. Life assails you, invades all your senses with its insane noises, its smells, its touches, with the countless



OF CALCUTTA



Rowing boats along the Hooghly with the Calcutta High Court in the background: the arm of the Ganges on whose banks Calcutta was founded more than three centuries ago



(Clockwise from above)
Devotees take a holy dip
in the Ganges; a bamboo
pole put up on a flooded
street to warn against an
open manhole; the
compound of the Jain
Temple: the life within



spectacles it provides. This life will make you see the miracle it is, will make you understand its mystery a little better. And I swear that this city is, above all, a homage to life.

If you want to immerse yourself in Calcutta, you will need to proceed by carefully measured steps.

Take a good look at the people who walk in little groups down the avenues of Victoria Memorial. What a spectacle! A stout man kneels down on the grass and gathers some dew in his hands. He ritually moistens his forehead and lets a few drops trickle down into his mouth. As soon as they get out of their cars, whole families—grandparents in *dhotis*, parents in European-style clothes and children in jogging togs—start running with the speed of people doing a marathon. Women in brightly coloured *saris* with track shoes on their feet try to keep up with their husbands. Watch out,



people clear their throats zealously and spit with gusto!

Beyond the Victoria Memorial an oasis of green stretches far into the distance, a surprising sight in a city overcrowded to the point of suffocation. At the exclusive Calcutta Race Course the daily training of thoroughbreds also takes place just as the city is waking up. It is still cool and in front of the entrance gates several dozen ponies paw the ground, held by lads from the private stables of rich polo players. These start arriving in their Alfas and Jaguars for a few chukkas to get into form.

The magic moment has arrived: the red disc of Surya, India's god of the sun, rises out of the milky-white pollution and hangs between the four turrets of the neo-gothic belltower of St Paul's Cathedral. A *sadhu* in saffron sits in lotus position on a bench under an arbour and recites *mantras*. Transfixed, almost

hypnotised, couples and whole families reverently view the ball of fire which heralds the end of darkness and the birth of a new day. I, too, am moved. I close my eyes for a moment of reflection, of happiness and gratitude towards Calcutta.

Nowadays Calcutta is bloated and sprawling, of course. But how dare anybody accuse her of being a monster and an aberration when the city has played a role as hostess to the unfortunate to the very limits of what is possible or, indeed, bearable? Certainly, the failings of her municipality, her inadequate infrastructures and the total collapse of all urban life worthy of that name during the monsoon should be criticised. Her utterly ridiculous system of public transport and the lack of discipline among her inhabitants have to be deplored. But let us not forget that in less



Life! Nowhere does it manifest itself with greater intensity or more variety! Take the smells of Calcutta, for example. They fill your nostrils in such great wafts that you can almost taste them



(Top) Dockyards built during the British Raj; a house near Howrah Bridge; (facing page) acrobatics on the Maidan: many faces

than one generation more than six million displaced persons have descended on Calcutta to set up home.

Drowned in those successive waves of castaways who had nothing left but their hopes and dreams when they came to find shelter and solace, Calcutta can only offer a space of 3.7 square metres to each one of her inhabitants and just over one square metre of these inhabitants live in a shantytown or slum. One square metre! Draw one square metre on the floor of your apartment and you will understand! Calcutta means seething masses; teeming, swarming crowds, a forming sea of ants. It is like leaving a packed football stadium after a match. To experience this atmosphere of overwhelming suffocation you should one day attend a big political rally on the Maidan.

The Maidan, the lung and the forum of Calcutta, lies as an immense green oasis

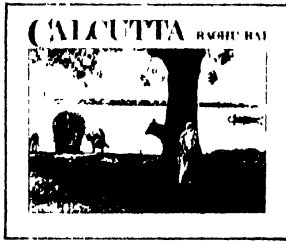
in the midst of this urban cancer. It serves simultaneously as a cricket ground, a marketplace, an amusement park, a pasture and a meeting place for snake charmers, vendors of aphrodisiacs, fortune-tellers, quack doctors, narrators of the *Ramayana*, holy men, monkey-tamers and hunger-strikers. At tea-time thousands of brown men pour out of factories, sweatshops, docks and bazaars, run to the Maidan and listen until late at night to the politicians in power promising them a better life.

On the Howrah Bridge, this heap of scrap iron which spans the Hooghly and whose flooring expands by one and half metres in hot weather, migrants from the countryside have their first taste of urban madness in the city of illusions. It is definitely an experience not to be missed; crossing the Howrah Bridge at any time of day creates the impression of being trapped in a maelstrom of struggling bodies desperately trying to escape annihilation.

Life! Nowhere does it manifest itself with greater intensity or more variety! Take the smells of Calcutta for example. They fill your nostrils in such great wafts that you can almost taste them. Complex odours, they are always based on some kind of putrefaction—a blend of incense, spices, industrial waste, rotting vegetation, humidity, acrid fumes from coal stoves, urine. And what about the images of daily life? The photographs in this album capture them magnificently. A whole book would not be enough to describe them all in their prodigious diversity and richness. When I am away from Calcutta I like to recall the respect I felt for those coolies in rags whom I observed one evening on the bank of the Hooghly. Their muscles still glistening from the tremendous strain of pushing a handcart piled high with boxes, they came to sit for a moment and listen to the raucous voice of an old storyteller who recited a few verses of the *Ramayana* for them, the Song of Songs for Hindus, from which the masses of India draw comfort and the certainty that good will always triumph over evil.

But it is above all the homage paid to the Hindu goddess Durga, the destroyer of demons, which transforms Calcutta into such a beacon of faith. For four days each autumn, the city with such a sinister reputation turns into a magical place of lights, joy and hope. I discovered the rites of this festival in an amazing "place; a whole district of old sheds, workshops and alleys where hundreds of men, fathers and sons, fashion the most





It is the homage paid to goddess Durga, which transforms Calcutta into a beacon of faith. For four days each autumn, the city turns into a magical place of lights, joy and hope

fascinating collection of works of art ever to be devoted to a deity or a saint. For a whole year these artists from the Kumar caste, the potters of Calcutta, vie with each other for inspiration and love so that the grandest, most sumptuous representations of the Goddess Durga might spring from their hands. It is prodigious work; after making the basic structure from braided straw, the potters coat their models with grey clay which they then sculpt delicately to achieve the desired form and expression. Finally they complete the statue by painting it, resulting in a fantastic and deliberately grotesque appearance. Thousands of Durgas would have been ordered in advance by families, associations and communities. At dawn on the fourth day of the festival, trucks, hand-carts, taxis or even rickshaws take the statues and their devout owners to the banks of the Hooghly, the noisy arm of the Ganges, the mother of the world. This evening hundreds of thousands of Calcuttans crowd around the riverbanks and it takes the faithful many hours to reach the *ghats*. Each Durga is garlanded with flowers and the families lower them slowly and reverentially into the water. The Durgas entrusted to the

sacred river are carried along by the current and move away towards the vastness of the ocean, taking with them all the joys and sorrows of the people.

A slum (literally a district of hovels) is a shantytown where the density of the population can reach, as in this case, 130,000 inhabitants per sq. kilometre, where there is not even one tree per three thousand inhabitants, not a single flower, butterfly or songbird, only vultures and crows. A slum is a shantytown where the air is so polluted that it kills one member in each family, where hygienic conditions are so appalling that tuberculosis and dysentery reduce life expectancy to one of the lowest anywhere in the world. Above all, however, a slum has one common denominator; almost total economic misery. A human being here has less than two rupees (one-fifth of a dollar) per day. Thousands of slums dot Calcutta and its periphery—at least 3,000 according to the municipality's statisticians. They estimate that more than 40 per cent of Calcutta's population or roughly four million inhabitants live in a slum. Yet, there is an essential difference between these abject quarters and the





(Clockwise from left)
Durga Puja rituals;
Victorian architecture in a
central Calcutta building;
early morning Gita
discourses on the Maldan;
variety of life



shantytowns of the west. In the east slum dwellers come from rural parts and somehow they have managed to recreate their villages on a plot in Calcutta. A slum is truly a village within the city. It has kept its village life, adapted and disfigured, of course, but nonetheless tangible.

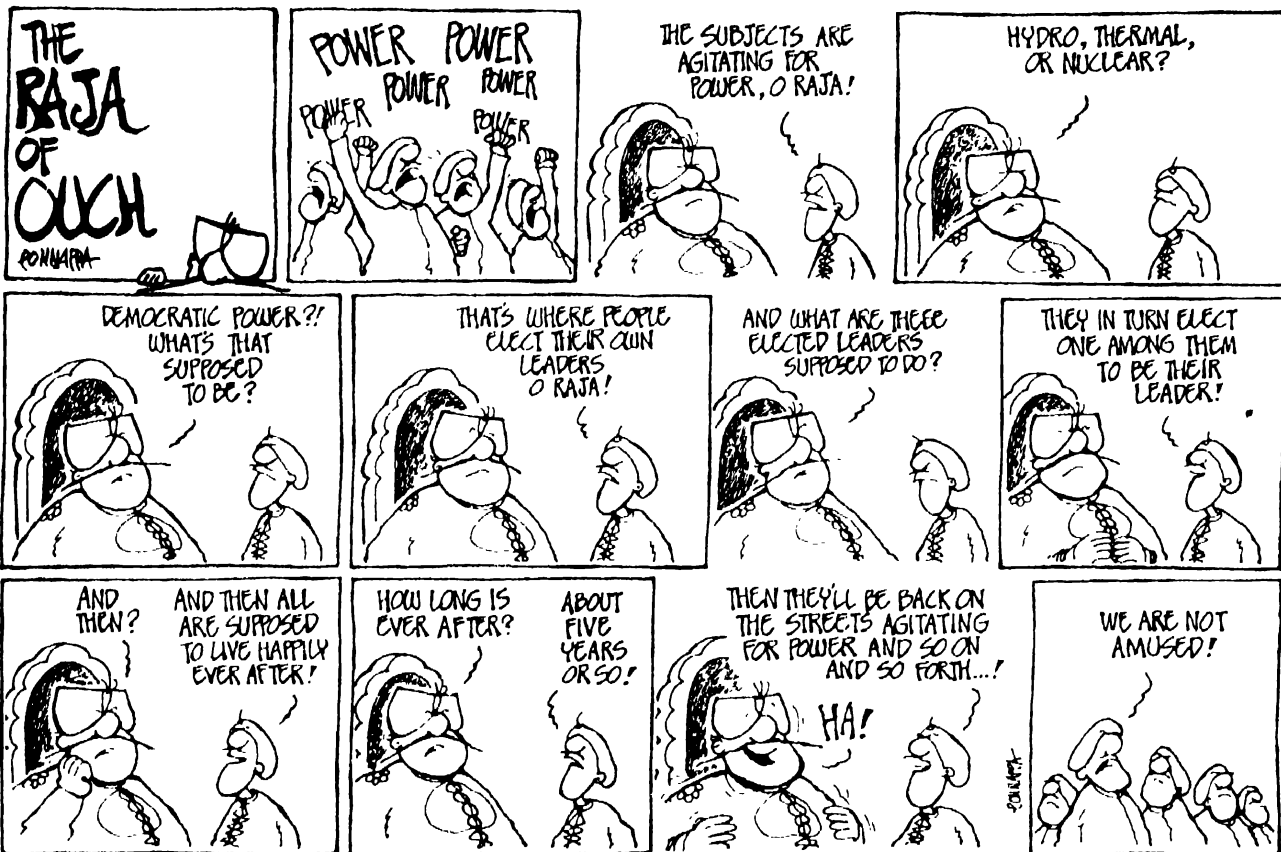
But the miracle of Calcutta is that this accumulation of disastrous elements,



which would have led to decay and destruction anywhere else, is counterbalanced here by other exceptional factors which allow the pauper not only to remain human but to transcend his misery and become a model of humanity, a creature on the verge of extinction in western consumer societies.

Would that every man concerned about his fellow man's well-being could undertake the pilgrimage to Calcutta's slums, he will learn that the weak are helped instead of crushed, that orphans are immediately adopted by their neighbours, that old people are not only accepted but actually revered by their children. The children! The children of Calcutta's slums! Glorious children of Calcutta with your innocent faces fed on misery, you are the fountain of all life. Your lightheartedness, the joy-of-life ring in your magic laughter, shine on your dark faces and in your luminous eyes. Your sparkling freshness and your serious games, your lovely songs and dances bring colour to this grey world. Is it not thanks to you that adults here are able to smile and laugh more and better perhaps than anywhere else in the world? For beyond their anguish, their shame and sadness, their hearts are filled with hope and joy.

Calcutta by Raghu Rai. Introduction: Dominique Lapierre. Published by Time Books International. New Delhi. Price: Rs 750.

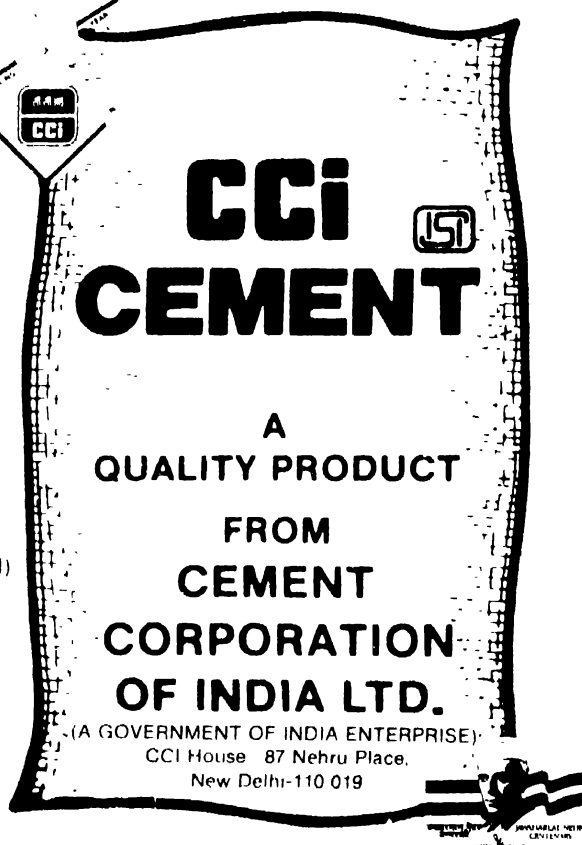


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Palghat, Trichur,
Trivandrum, Quilon
Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu :
Madras, Salem, Trichy

Tale of a tree

The Adyar banyan gets a new lease of life

The historical associations were many. The 45-foot tall Adyar banyan, occupying pride of place in the Theosophical Society's campus in eastern Madras, had been witness to many a significant event in its long life, (which many put at over 350 years). According to theosophist Ms Sarada: "It was under its shade that the decision to form the Congress Party was taken, and the seeds of the Home Rule movement sown by Annie Besant. When Rajaji formed his first ministry in 1937, Rukmini Arundale had hosted a party for him and his Cabinet colleagues under this very tree."

Over the years the Adyar Aazhamaram (as the locals called it), had many distinguished visitors—Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Pandit Nehru and Indira Gandhi. And then, on 17 June, the Theosophist Society's garden played host to a storm, which left the giant banyan, spread over 40,000 square feet, uprooted in its aftermath. The central trunk of the tree, once a major tourist attraction, lay forlorn among the many aerial roots.

Nobody knew definitely what caused the damage, though. But the general consensus seemed to be that it must have been the storm. Parvathi Venkataraman (85), who lives on the Theosophical Society campus recalls: "At about 8.30 that night, I heard a deafening peal of thunder and knew that some nearby structure would have borne the brunt. Probably, this must have struck the tree."

The news brought hundreds of shocked people to the site the next morning. The society's garden superintendent, Captain P.D. Venkatesh appeared tearful as he looked upon his long-time companion lying supine on the ground.

But this was not the time for tears. The Adyar banyan had to be salvaged any which way it could. But who was going to do this? The society's president Radha Burnier was away in Australia, and vice-president Sunder Narayan in no shape to undertake such a strenuous job at his advanced age. Nor did the society have the requisite funds to attempt major repair work.

N. Ram, associate editor of *The Hindu* stepped into the breach, getting va-

rious agencies involved in the rescue operations. The horticulturalists who were pressed into service differed on the best way of going about things. O.T. Ravindran and Indrasen argued for replanting the tree with a third of its length inside the ground and feeding it with hormones for a quick recovery. But well-known agricultural scientist Dr M.S. Swaminathan felt that the hor-

Adyar banyan were damaged. A special 20-tonne crane was requisitioned from the port's handling contractor company, Sanco Trans, and taken to the site on a low-bed trailer so that it did not damage the surrounding plant cover. Says MPT's additional chief engineer Ranganathan, who led the rescue operations: "The operation was a delicate one because the tree was a living thing and

Nearly six days after the mishap, the trunk of the Adyar banyan was lifted by a crane and planted in a pit, while holy mantras were chanted to ensure the success of the enterprise



mones might harm the tree and suggested that it be replanted in a deep sand-filled pit and adequate manuring and spraying of water to keep the foliage alive be resorted to, instead.

The recovery unit of the Indian army was called in from its Madras base. But their cranes were only able to drag the tree along the ground, not lift it for purposes of replanting. The Southern Railways Engineers volunteered help, only to back out because they felt that their machinery could cause damage to the trunk.

The job finally fell to the Madras Port Trust (MPT) engineers. The trunk was bandaged with straw and thick rubber sheets to prevent damage and then lifted to a vertical position using a derrick and winch. The engineers had to take care so that none of the aerial branches of the

associated with the nation's rich history and culture. So we had to be doubly careful."

So, nearly six days after the mishap, on 23 June, at about 2 pm, the huge trunk was lifted by the crane and replanted in a pit already dug, while holy mantras were chanted to ensure the success of the enterprise. The tree was held upright in the pit filled with manured soil by six guy-wires, that were tied to six eight-foot long rails embedded in the ground, so that it wasn't blown away by strong winds.

Testified Sunder Narayan, the society's vice-president: "It was a great job and we are happy so many volunteered help." Operation Rescue over, all eyes are now set on the Adyar banyan, on the look-out for new leaves, whose presence would indicate the success of the venture.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Centenary treats

For sports lovers, major international tournaments are in the offing

This is the year of the centenary sport. Two major international competitions have been billed as Nehru Centenary tournaments, while the third is in connection with Calcutta's tercentenary. While Calcutta will stage the finals of the cricket and football bonanzas the tennis extravaganza may be shifted to Bombay. Ironically, this is the only competition being held to mark Calcutta's 300th year.

The multi-crore cricket tournament will be staged in different Test venues of the country. It is planned as a six-nation competition with hosts India, Pakistan, England, Sri Lanka, Australia and the West Indies playing limited overs cricket on a round-robin basis, which will be followed by the semi-finals and the final. According to the convenor of the tournament, Jagmohan Dalmia, each team will be paid \$25,000 as participation fee. Apart from free board and lodging, the participants will be in line for prize money totalling \$1,25,000 with the winners pocketing \$40,000.

But all is not yet in order, with both the West Indies and Australia yet to formally accept the proposal. Dalmia, who will be going to London shortly for the ICC conference, hopes to finalise the deal with both these countries. "There were a host of factors responsible for the lukewarm response to the World Cup competition, the final of which was held in Calcutta. This time, however, we find no reason why not only the final but also the entire competition will not be extremely successful."

The All India Football Federation

Maradona: craze of football fans

(AIFF) is even more optimistic. "We want to present our football fans with the very best football the world can offer," AIFF president and Union commerce minister Priya Ranjan Das Munshi said. He has visited several European countries in a bid to get leading football clubs like Bayern Munchen of West Germany to agree to play here. The idea is to get at least four top-level club sides to come over and face four of India's best.

The main thrust is, however, to get Maradona to play in Calcutta. That may not be too difficult because club teams the world over are not averse to the idea of playing exhibition matches provided the dates do not clash with their official engagements. And playing in India will be a lark because the local teams will not offer much opposition and it will only be a question of playing three or, at most, four tough matches. And that too, in a festive spirit.



The competition, in connection with the Nehru Centenary celebrations, has already been approved by the government. Whatever foreign exchange is involved, is proposed to be met by non-resident Indians so that there will be no drain on the exchequer. As for income, gate money anywhere in the country, except, of course, Delhi, is assured. Besides, in-stadia advertising is also expected to be heavy.

Now, it is a question of deciding on the exact dates of the competition and the teams which are to take part. Even if there is one leading team each from Italy, West Germany and England, the competition will be a success.

The only discordant note in this bonanza has been struck by the All Airlines Club, which is planning a Rs 1.25 crore tennis competition. Originally, this competition was to have been staged in Calcutta-- at the Yuva Bharati Krirangan. "But our sad experience with a few journalists has been the prime reason for our governing body to think in terms of holding this competition in Bombay," said Samareesh Basu Roy, the leading light of the club. "You see, some sports reporters decided to boycott our football competition and forced the others to join them. In Delhi, there had been a misunderstanding between the Durand Cup authorities and sports reporters. The latter refused to sit in the press box, but they did not forsake their duty of covering the competition. Here in Calcutta, we had the bitter experience of being shunned by reporters for no fault on our part," he added.

The Airlines Club has so far received the consent of Steffi Graf, Miloslav Mecir, Stefan Edberg and Helena Sukova to take part in the competition. Efforts are being made to get the French Open champion Michael Chang and some other upcoming young players. Bombay was also preferred because of the air facilities.

But the decision to shift the venue to Bombay is not final. One hopes the Airlines Club will change its stand, if only because the competition has been billed as part of the tercentenary celebrations of Calcutta.

Arijit Sen/Calcutta

Walking on water

One need not be a *yogi* to walk on water. All you need to do is get in touch with 33-year-old Ramakrishna Ghosh from Nimta near Calcutta. The jobless Ghosh, who has been an inventor of sorts, has come up with a pair of canvas shoes with propellers. The canvas shoes are propped on two small air-pillows and the propellers attached to them run on a 12-volt battery which can be



carried on a back pack. The special shoes which can, at present, walk at the speed of 12 km per hour, need to be improved upon. Though Ghosh has received a lot of encouragement—Sam Pitroda, for example, wrote to say that he was "delighted" to hear about the invention—he has yet to garner funds to carry on. Undaunted, Ghosh intends to improve the shoes and test them on the choppy, icy waters of the English Channel. But before that he wants to try them out on the Hooghly river and the Indian Ocean.

Typing pictures

Can typed letters make for beautiful pictures? Yes, if the artist is 21-year-old Bombay-based Manoj Majumdar whose obsession with sketching on a typewriter has shot him into the international limelight. The artist claims to have



created a world record by sketching on his typewriter a 12 ft x 9 ft sketch of Mrs Gandhi. Other portraits include those of Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, Mikhail Gorbachev and Kapil Dev. And Prime Minister Gandhi was so pleased with Majumdar's efforts that he sent the artist a signed photograph recording his appreciation.

Marathon talk

He talked them out of their place in the *Guinness Book of World Records* and

regained his position. At a beach resort near Madras recently, 57-year-old S. E. Jayaraman talked incessantly for 360 hours—a new record for "non-stop talking".

Jayaraman had entered the 1987 *Guinness* book after having delivered a 200-hour lecture. But then, N.S. Viswanathan, who also hails from Tamil Nadu, had beaten his record in January 1988, and one Mr Theeran had spoken for 260 hours in May.

While Jayaraman has regained his record, Tamil Nadu has earned the distinc-



tion of having the three most "talkative" people in the world.

THIS INDIA

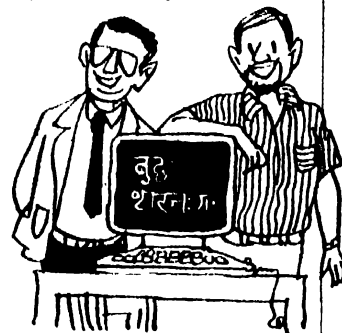
● **RAMANATHAPURAM.** Water scarcity is so acute in this town that residents of some localities have taken to "raiding" trains for the precious commodity. Though the local municipality has made some arrangements for the supply of water, it does not reach certain parts of the place, and women living in those areas jump on to moving trains, fill their pots from the latrines and jump off—*The Hindustan Times* (K. Janardhan Bhat, New Delhi)

● **SHIMLA:** A piquant situation arose at the certificate examination of the Indian Institute of Bankers recently. For one paper, "principles of management and financing rural development", there were five invigilators for only two candidates—*The Tribune* (Dinesh Kumar, Chandigarh)

● **HAJIPUR:** A bridegroom was assaulted and chased away by the villagers of Shabdbujang in Vaishali district when he refused to wear a *dhoti* during the marriage ceremony in spite of repeated requests. According to villagers the bridegroom became furious and manhandled the priest who was conducting the ceremony. This earned the wrath of the villagers who in turn assaulted the bridegroom. The bride also refused to marry him—*The Times of India* (Sannu Sonal, Bokaro)

PRIZE RS 100 FOR THE ENTRY GIVEN FIRST

Sanskrit on software



Their love for the language knows no bounds. Two Americans, Vyaas Houston and David Lavine, a McIntosh computer programmer, are working together to evolve a software which will make the process of learning Sanskrit simple.

Spurred by a desire to make one of the world's oldest languages popular, Houston had earlier perfected an intensive, immersion method, based on calligraphy and chanting, for learning Sanskrit over the weekend.

The 20-hour approach helps participants to familiarise themselves with the sounds, learn to read and pronounce the language clearly, and pick up the basic structure of Sanskrit grammar.

For women only

West Bengal has, it goes without saying, been a trendsetter in many fields. Now, it is coming up with a forest which will be run exclusively by women. Pramila Bon, the first of its kind in the country, will be developed as an economic forest. According to West Bengal forest and environment minister Ambarish Mukherjee, women in and around the forest—which will be coming up in the Pancha thana area in Purulia district—will be involved with the project so that they will be able to earn their livelihood.

SUNDAY WEEK

BEGINNING 9 JULY 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

Try to conserve your energy and resources this week. Do not enter into new business contracts.

Curb extravagant tendencies. Those not yet in love are likely to find a suitable partner this week. The financial problems that you are facing now will soon be solved. Be patient and your hard times will be over soon.

Good dates: 9, 10 and 15

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: North-west



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

This, unfortunately, is not a good week for you. People you have been trusting for so long are likely to deceive you. Those in love will have a trying time because a romance will come to a sudden end, causing you great distress. However, promotions are likely for those in service. Be tactful in your dealings with relatives. Your children may create problems, but do not lose your cool.

Good dates: 11, 12 and 14

Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: South



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

This is not a good phase for you. Minor problems will keep bothering you from time to time. Some of your acquaintances will try to deceive you, so be on your guard. Let not a sudden reversal of fortunes dishearten you. It will only be a temporary setback. This is the time to establish contacts with people. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 10, 13 and 14

Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: North and East



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

A splendid week lies ahead of you. Do not hesitate to grab every opportunity that comes your way. Have confidence in yourself and do not miss the opportunity of making a drastic change in your career; it will be a change for the better. This is not a good time for romance. Consult your elders before taking any decisions regarding marriage.

Good dates: 12, 13 and 15

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 8

Favourable direction: West and South



LEO (21 July—20 August)

A favourable week for most of you. Those in government service are likely to be rewarded with a promotion.

Businessmen may make fresh investments. Some of them may be risky, but this should not worry them. Those looking forward to a transfer will have their desires fulfilled. However, you will have to meet quite a few expenses this month.

Good dates: 13, 14 and 15

Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 9

Favourable direction: East and South-west



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

This is going to be a favourable week indeed. For those in business, this is an excellent time to enter into new contracts. Professionals are likely to go out of town this week. Your children will do well in their studies. A word of caution: do not squander your resources. A good time for romance. But do not be in a hurry to get married.

Good dates: 9, 11 and 13

Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 8

Favourable direction: South-east



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

This week, unfortunately, is not very favourable. But do not be disheartened. There may be a surprise in store for you towards the weekend. Problems you are facing now may be solved if you seek the advice of an elderly person. Keep your cool: your fits of temper might get you into trouble. Take care of your health.

Good dates: 12, 14 and 15

Lucky numbers: 1, 2 and 5

Favourable direction: East



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

The stars are in your favour this week. So grab every opportunity that comes your way. Persons of the opposite sex will come out of their way to help you in your ventures. Try not to spend too much this week. A letter will bring you good news. A favourable week for doctors and scientists. Those in the mass media will do well.

Good dates: 11, 14 and 15

Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 7

Favourable direction: North



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

This is an excellent week for romance. A word of caution to those contemplating marriage: do not take hasty decisions. Those of you who are in service should consult your colleagues and superiors. A friend of the opposite sex will help you in an important matter. Try to spend some time with your family.

Good dates: 9, 13 and 15

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: West



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

A very prosperous week for those in business. Push all your pending deals and make new contacts. Young people will have a very busy social life. Those in service might be surprised by a sudden promotion. Those connected with the creative arts will have a very successful week. You are advised to take care of your health and keep away from romance.

Good dates: 10, 12 and 13

Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: South



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

A good week for those in love. But take care; do not be extravagant in order to please your beloved. Try not to neglect your duties so that you can maintain the confidence reposed on you by your employers. Consider everything before you quit your present job. Financially, this is a bright week, for you might gain some property.

Good dates: 9, 10 and 12

Lucky numbers: 3, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: North



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

This is a favourable week for you. Not only will friends and relatives come out of their way to help you, but you will praise from your employers and colleagues. But in spite of the favourable influences there are chances that you might get entangled in disputes and arguments. So a word of advice: do not speak out your mind.

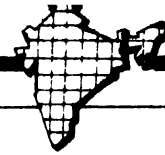
Good dates: 12, 13 and 15

Lucky numbers: 1, 7 and 8

Favourable direction: North

Star Partners: Virgo—Gemini

The Gemini man is a versatile and charming person, qualities that attract the Virgo woman towards him. She should, however, not get carried away. The Gemini man is very restless, and this may get the better of him. She may not be able to tolerate it.



The Raja's truth

The Janata Dal in Maharashtra seems to be out of the race to the next election. The Shiv Sena, fast emerging as an all-Maharashtra party, has told V.P. Singh's mob where to get off and even the BJP has told the Dal that, given a choice, it prefers seat adjustments with the Shiv Sena.

Where does this leave V.P. Singh? Well, perhaps Murli Deora, Bombay's Congress boss, said it best, "V.P. Singh told us that wherever he is, he will work for the Congress. When he switched sides, people called him a liar. But I think he was telling the truth. Even now everything he does works to our advantage!"

The Dal cold war

The Janata Dal cold war continues. And the frosty vibes were much in evidence during the last week of June when the party stirred itself to commemorate the declaration of the Emergency by protesting the government misuse of Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR).

Chandra Shekhar dissociated himself from the main

R.K. Hegde: frosty vibes



Singh: working for the Congress party do-s, choosing instead to take off for the Yercaud hills in Tamil Nadu, where he remained closetted with a handful of his loyalists, discussing issues of great import, no doubt.

Perhaps the reception he received at Bangalore also came in for some attention. Apparently, the state Dal unit, under instructions from R.K. Hegde, made no arrangements to either receive him at the airport or to ensure that he had a decent place to stay. Piqued at this snub, Chandra Shekhar put up at old faithful Jayant Malhoutra's guest house instead.

Not surprisingly Janata Party members were out in full force to meet Shekhar, led by the redoubtable H.D. Deve Gowda and B.L. Shankar, a former state

Deve Gowda: accompanying party



Murli Deora: words of wisdom

minister, both of whom met him at the airport and accompanied him to Yercaud.

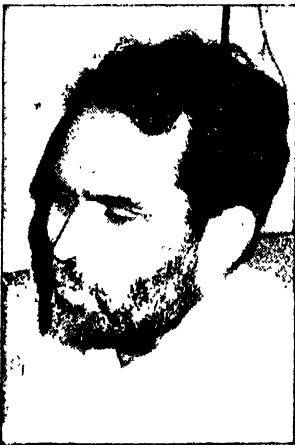
There was one Janata Dal heavyweight, though, who met Shekhar in Bangalore. None other than the Hegde sidekick Jeevaraj Alva.

Left in the lurch

The plight of Indubhai Patel is far from enviable. Most of the Janata Party members have opted for the Janata Dal and Patel has been left holding an almost empty fort. What's more the Janata office has also been taken over by the Dal, headed by Chimanbhai Patel, and the Janata Party members have no place to function out of.

To add to Indubhai's woes

Chandra Shekhar: going it alone



is the fact that his friends in Ahmedabad no longer invite him for an overnight stay when he's in town.

But Indubhai is far from being fazed. He continues to declare dramatically: "Even if all my supporters desert me, I will not join the Janata Dal." And in the time-honoured manner of the marginalised politician threatens direly that he'll soon make stunning revelations.

Well, what's keeping him?

Change of heart

One of the many politicians who lined up to applaud N.T. Rama Rao's portrayal as *Viswanutra*, on the day of the *muhurat* was Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi. Which was all very well, except that some years ago, the DMK chief had taken grave objection to another CM reverting to the silver screen.

In 1981, when M.G. Ramachandran spoke of a return to the arc lights, Karunanidhi had reacted with horror and outrage, and even filed a petition in the Madras High Court, in the name of his lawyer's driver, pleading that the chief minister be restrained from making a cake of himself.

Now, however, all that moralising is long forgotten and Karunanidhi has no compunctions about cheering from the sidelines as NTR goes into that old mythological routine.

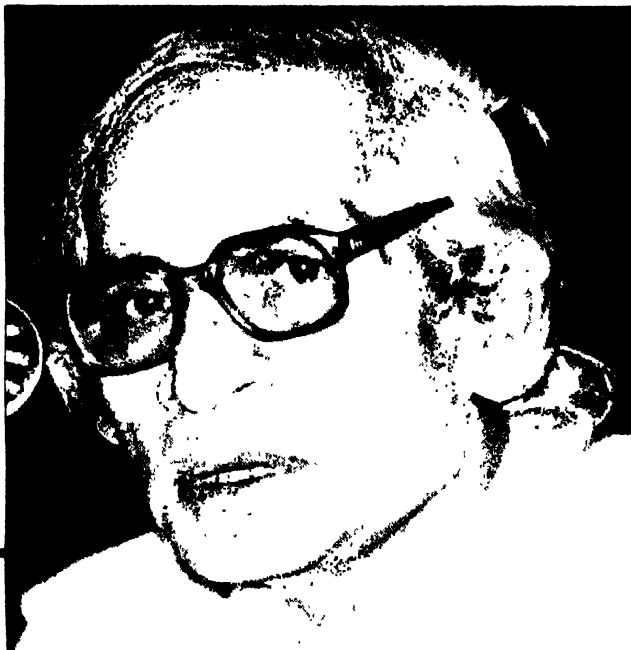
Political pundits have an explanation about the change of heart, however. They say that the DMK chief has turned devout Hindu in his old age, and has begun subscribing to the Vedic scriptures. And since the sage Viswamitra is undeniably part of that tradition, the Tamil Nadu CM can't help but forget his earlier reservations about politicians doubling as actors. ■

Azad Congress

There is widespread outrage over the Congress high command's recent directive that general secretaries and PCC chiefs may not contest the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. The high command's reasoning is as follows: party office-bearers will be needed to organise the campaign as it is better to ensure that they have no elections of their own to fight.

Makes sense? Maybe. But PCC chiefs have their own complaints. Firstly, they say, there has never been a time when any PCC chief has neglected a campaign because of his own election. Secondly, as the directive says nothing about Assembly elections, what will happen is that most PCC chiefs will end up as MLAs, so chief ministers will have to contend with alternate power centres in the Assembly. Thirdly, because chief ministers will all complain about this, an inevitable compromise will result: PCC chiefs will be elevated to the Rajya Sabha. So, in effect, all that the directive will ensure is that PCCs are headed by MPs, who have not faced the electorate.

Gopi Arora: policy maker?



Gulam Nabi Azad: getting himself off the hook

If there are so many valid objections, then why was the decision taken in the first place?

Step forward, Ghulam Nabi Azad, AICC(I) general secretary, and favourite of the Prime Minister. As Azad cannot win an election from any parliamentary constituency in India, he has lobbied for this directive to get himself off the hook.

The PCC chiefs will not forgive him in a hurry.

High flying Arora



Devi Lal: 'the bandit'

Where has Gopi Arora, the peripatetic finance secretary been all of this week? Beijing, by the look of things. But why should the finance secretary need to talk to the Chinese? No reason. Arora is not there as finance secretary at all. He is part of a foreign policy team, headed by foreign secretary S.K. Singh.

Why did Rajiv, and Arora?

There are two views. One is that he handled relations with China when he was in the PMO and so, in the interests of continuity, was taken along. And the second is that, contrary to the conventional wisdom, Rajiv still depends on Arora for major policy decisions.

All Tewari Radio

Much has been written about Professor K.K. Tewari, India's abusive minister for information and broadcasting. Two things, however, have not been mentioned so far.

One: that the good professor is currently Rajiv's blue-eyed boy and the Prime Minister thoroughly approves of his sock-it-to-them attitude. Attempts by secretary Bob Murari and additional secretary Suman



K.K. Tewari: a new hobby

Dubey to counsel restraint have been brushed aside by the PM.

And two: the multi-faceted Tewari has found a new hobby. He sits at home and writes All India Radio's Hindi bulletins. So the next time a newscaster calls Devi Lal a bandit or compares V.P. Singh to Pamella Bordes, you'll know which genius wrote the script. ■

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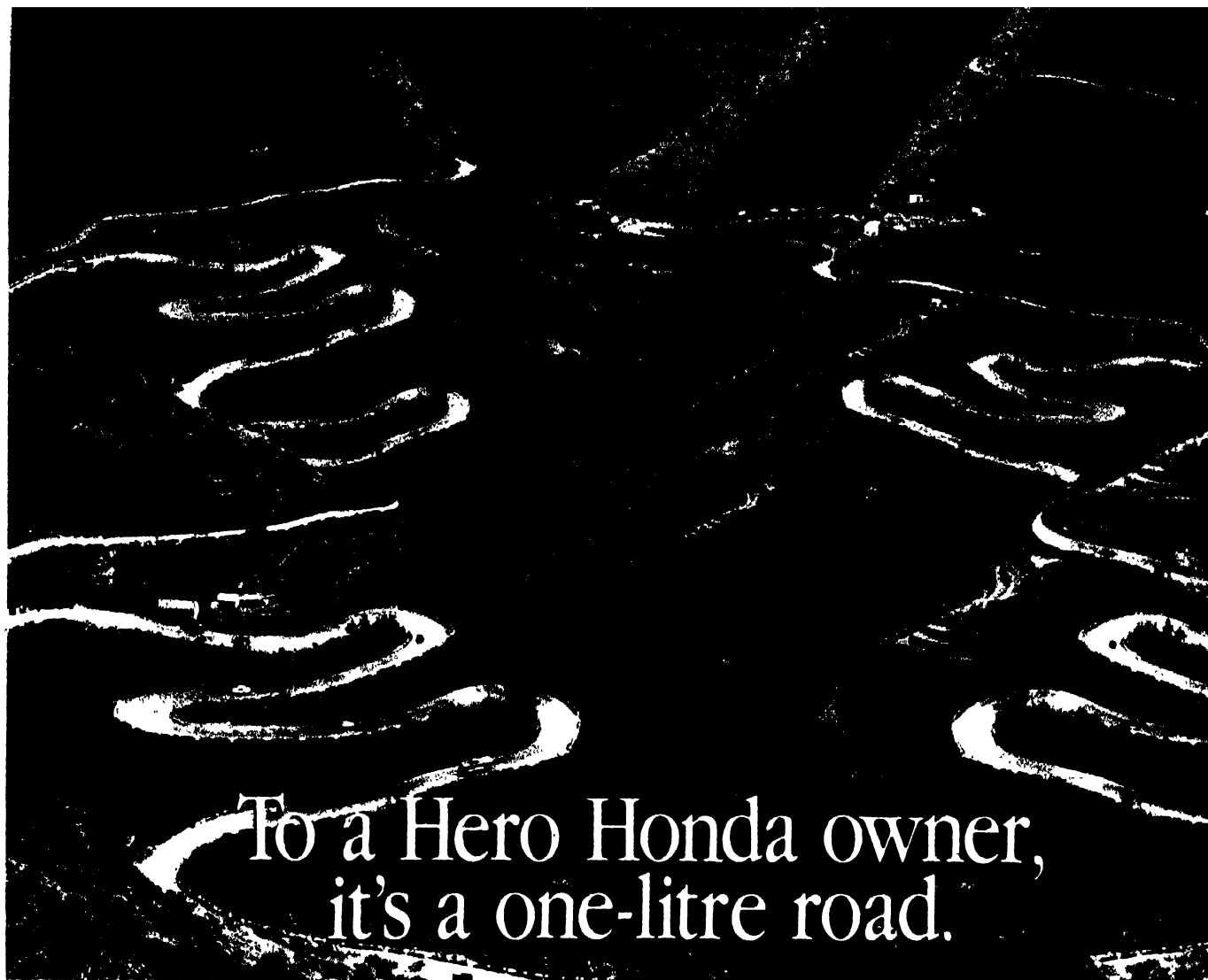
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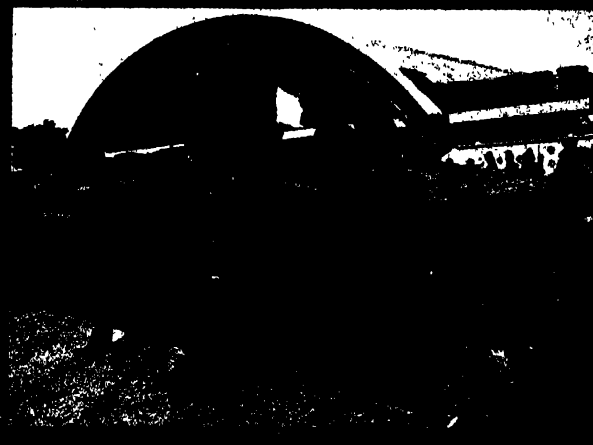
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JAYALALITHA: GOODBYE DOESN'T MEAN FAREWELL

SUNDAY



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MAN OF MANY TALENTS



Imran Khan is now into editing a sports monthly, *Cricket Life*.



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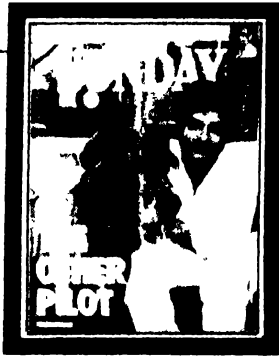
She is not your average Pakistani politician. Kevin Starr, her tutor at Harvard, remembers a Benazir Bhutto the world has never seen.

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Flight to power

Satish Sharma is enjoying the same powers that Sanjay Gandhi did during Mrs Gandhi's term in office (*The other pilot*, 25 June—1 July). Sharma has the confidence of Rajiv Gandhi and, in all likelihood, influences the decisions of the Prime Minister in vital matters of governance. This trend is dangerous because the PM may ultimately have to pay the price of wrong decisions made at the behest of his advisers. Satish Sharma's friendship with Rajiv Gandhi is no doubt beneficial to the former, but it will not do any good to the interests of the country. It is strange to find the media paying so much importance to the 'other pilot'.

Nanda Dulal Roy Chowdhury, Kharagpur (West Bengal)

It was indeed distressing to know that a vast democracy like India is guided by a person who is actually a pilot. Till the other day, Satish Sharma had nothing to do with the government, but today he is the second most

Satish Sharma: enormous clout



powerful man in the country! The man who owned no more than a flat in Delhi, is now the owner of 10 acres of land on the outskirts of the capital.

Rajiv Gandhi has often erred in choosing his advisers. The likes of Arun Nehru, V.P. Singh and Arif Mohammad Khan have not stood him in good stead. It is time the PM woke up to the fact that what the country needs at this stage are people with political acumen. The electorate will never tolerate the concentration of power in a single person. Rajiv Gandhi should learn from his past mistakes. He ought to know that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Kail Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Satish Sharma's phenomenal rise from a suave pilot of Indian Airlines to the position of a high-profile power broker exposes the vulnerability of Indian politics. Today's scenario of the country is a bleak reminder of the dark days of the Emergency. Satish Sharma's newly-acquired affluence is a sad reflection of the role of money in today's politics. Nonetheless, I salute the uncrowned sultan of Delhi.

Anil Kumar Dwivedi, New Delhi

Two-faced

Udayan Sharma's write-up on Arun Nehru's foreign jaunt highlights the questionable integrity of the Opposition stalwarts (*A mysterious trip*, 18—24 June). Yours is the only magazine which has, time and again, exposed the nefarious deals of the Opposition leaders who are ever so ready to point an accusing finger at the ruling party, while preferring to ignore the corruption in their own ranks. The tirade against the Congress(I) is uncalled for because, if the Opposition comes to power, corruption will reach its peak, as Arun Nehru's trip has shown.

V. Srinivasan, Madras (Tamil Nadu)



Arun Nehru holidaying abroad: who foots the bill?

Of late we have been hearing of sabotages in public places resulting in the loss of lives and property. Arun Nehru's is a classic case of the sabotage of the nation. We sweat and toil only to pay for the mysterious trips of politicians. It was a mistake on the part of Mrs Gandhi to induct Arun Nehru into politics. "Look before you leap" should be our watchword before we re-elect this power-hungry politician.

Ms. Sufyan Sadq, Bhubaneswar (Orissa)

A different name

This refers to P.S. Sheth's letter (*Letters*, 18—24 June) regarding the meteoric rise of Dhirubhai Ambani. While agreeing with his views, I think it would be more appropriate to rename his company as Government of India (A Reliance Industries Ltd undertaking).

S. Srinivasa Kumar, Bangalore (Karnataka)

It's Sanskrit

At the end of the review of my book (*Gossip sweet and sour*, 11—17 June), Khushwant Singh has wanted to know why south Indians add an *am* at the end of a word and north Indians do not. For instance, why does *Shakuntala* in the north become *Shakuntalam* in the south? If he has come to this conclusion because of the three plays mentioned in the article and the characters in them, the assumption is incorrect. The names of the plays in Sanskrit end with *am*

according to the rules for the formation of a compound word of this nature. The south Indians are in no way responsible for it!

As for my name, the Tamil form is *Sundaram*. Incidentally, *Sundaram* in Sanskrit means beauty, as in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. But the Sanskrit names Rama and Krishna become Raman and Krishnan in Tamil. Similarly, *raga* and *tala* in Sanskrit become *ragam* and *talam* in Tamil.

K.V.K. Sundaram, Kasauli (Uttar Pradesh)

The columnist complains that even after re-reading the Sanskrit classics, he is unable to discover why south Indians add an *am* to a word while the north Indians do not. It might interest Khushwant Singh to know that in Sanskrit, *Shakuntala* is the name of a girl, and *Shaakuntalam* is the name of Kalidasa's work on *Shakuntala*. The names of all Kalidasa's works end in *am*, and were given by the poet himself. Doordarshan's emblem bears the words *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. Instead of asking K.V.K. Sundaram why his name ends with *am*, the columnist would do well to ask Doordarshan for an explanation.

P.K. Ramakrishnan and Savitha Ramakrishnan, Bangalore (Karnataka)

The diatribe tribe

The extract from Janardan Thakur's book on V.P. Singh was interesting (*The heritage of Manda*, 25 June—1 July). However, I failed to understand why such a hue



V.P. Singh: whipping boy

and cry is being made about Manda's murky past. After all, most of our MLAs, MPs and ministers have a treacherous, if not murkier, past. In any case, it was hardly surprising to find Janardan Thakur joining the ranks of Girilal Jain, R.K. Karanjia and M.J. Akbar. After all, if Thakur has to be in favour with the powers at the Centre, he has to make every effort to denounce the Opposition, especially V.P. Singh.

P.S. Sheth, Bombay (Maharashtra)

Kisan dictator

Kanshi Ram's comment reflects his undemocratic psyche (*Sight and sound*, 23—29 April). If he had his way, the kisan leader would have had a one-man rule, with the rank and file manoeuvred to suit his designs. Perhaps this attitude led to his party's humiliating defeat at the Haryana polls.

A.B. Roy, Hooghly (West Bengal)

Big mouth

K.K. Tewari crossed all levels of decency in his interview (*A talent to abuse*, 25 June—1 July). Though Tewari is well known for his ability to use vituperative language against his political opponents, this time he has surpassed all limits. He says that V.P. Singh, like Pamela Bordes, is willing to go to bed with anyone for political power. Has Tewari forgotten the fact that he is earning his

Their own land

The title of the article is awkward—and misleading—because the people of Pondicherry are living in the country of their forefathers which is now a part of India (*The nowhere people*, 2—8 April). The strangers are those who came from the rest of the Indian sub-continent. The "curious twist of history" that "made them, legally, citizens of France", as the article mentions, is the result of the cession treaty between the French and Indian governments. "When in

Rome, they say, do as the Romans do". But the Pondicherrians do as they have been doing in Pondicherry for three centuries. The French Pondicherrians are not immigrants, either in the state of Pondicherry or in France where a French citizenship makes them equal to any other French citizen. As for the cost of living, it is the same everywhere. If France is far from being an El Dorado, it is the least racist country I know of.

J. Bouchet, Paris (France)



K.K. Tewari: vituperative

livelihood by abusing his master Rajiv Gandhi's political rivals? He should realise that people living in glass houses cannot afford to throw stones at others. K.K. Tewari is a disgrace to our country.

Smita R. Gureja, Bokaro (Orissa)

Corrupt all

Apropos the article (*Left behind*, 18—24 June), the CPI(M), by supporting the wanton killing of unarmed civilians at Tiananmen Square, has left no one in doubt about how seriously they care for democracy. They are quick to dub the detention of Mandela and the incidents in Nicaragua as undemocratic. Yet the Chinese army's action of mowing down the students has evoked no response from the followers of democracy.

The Chinese students have demanded a judicial inquiry against the leaders whom they have charged of indulging in nepotism. In India, the West Bengal CM has



Jyoti Basu: unsympathetic

not bothered to order an inquiry into the Bengal Lamp and Calcutta Tramways scandals. It follows naturally that he will not support the demands of the students in China. An important lesson to be learnt from the rebellion in China is that once the communists achieve power, democracy ceases to be of any importance to them.

Kabirshankar Purkait, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Persecution

It was incredible to learn that even after 42 years of Independence, the Christians of Arunachal Pradesh are persecuted and terrorised (*A matter of faith*, 11—17 June). If Christianity becomes the religion of the majority in the state, would discrimination still continue?

If one endorses Hindu proselytism as an appropriate preventive to possible insurgency and secession, then why not send the Ramakrishna Mission to our northern frontier too?

F. Shenoy, Imphal (Manipur)

Corrigendum

In our issue dated 2—8 July (*Playing with pistols*), we carried a photograph of A.K. Jajodia. We have since learned that the man in the photograph is Aditya Kumar Jajodia, and not Alope Kumar Jajodia who is referred to in the story. Our apologies to both Jajodias.

SUNDAY

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Indian wit and humour



There are few of K.S. Yadurajan's kind in the country today

KHUSHWANT SINGH

It is like looking for a pin in a haystack. But I have found one recently. And curse myself for not having discovered it earlier. It must have glistened in the sunlight even though buried at the bottom of a hayrick. It is not entirely his fault. He started his career writing for *Shankar's Weekly* which had a very limited circulation before it folded up. Then for Pothan Joseph of the *Deccan Herald* which was hardly read north of the Narmada. To put people off his trail, he wrote under a pseudonym made up of his initials—Kay S. Wye. The outlandish name stands for K.S. Yadurajan, professor of linguistics at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad. My first encounter with his work was a fortnight ago when I received his anthology of light verse entitled, *It Couldn't Be a Verse—Or Worse Either* (Writers Workshop). I have inborn prejudice against Writers Workshop publications because most of them are published at the writers' expense. Writers are so anxious to see their names in print that when they fail to get accepted by commercial publishers, they go chequebooks in hand to Professor P. Lal, who then produces them in his inimitable sari border jackets. It's good business for P. Lal but not so good for authors and poets, most of whom deserve to remain unknown.

It is different with Yadurajan. If he was turned down by other publishers before he went to the Writers Workshop then all I can say to them is, "Shame! You should have known better. Yadurajan is a man of rare wit and humour. There are few of his kind in India today."

This collection, *Whimsies of My Yesterdays* opens with the traditional salutation—not *Shri Ganeshaya Namah*—but to the long-suffering donkey, symbol of the middle class:

Hail! Remarkable Ass!
Thou patron-saint of us

Yadurajan has been a teacher all his life and has collected an impressive list of degrees to attach to his name. He is a man of rare wit and humour. Parodying famous authors is his forte

Slow-moving, deep-thinking, long-enduring middle class

Bowed down with troubles and with tax

As endless and as hopeless

As the burdens which you carry

Magnificent Ass!

It ends with the invocation:

Give us then, O Ass!

Something of thy virtues.

YADURAJAN HAS been a teacher all his life and has collected an impressive list of degrees to attach to his name. What happens to some unfortunate young men is summed up in his poem, *The Unemployed MA*.

But there is one thing most touching sir,

About this scholar of ours:

All yesterday and today, sir,

He has been dietless!

I do not know whether Yadurajan is a cranky old bachelor or hounded by an overpowering wife and hordes of children. He has sympathy for both. For the *Lonely Bachelor* he writes:

Alone, uncared for in his darkling room

The lonely bachelor sits in complete gloom!

Pity the wretch who sits alone till eleven

Minding his books, setting the alarm at seven;

A creaking bedstead full of bugs and vermin

Is all that waits him when 'tis time to turn in;

And when he gets up next at seven or eight

No dainty wife has got a breakfast made!

His daily round, so dreary, starts and ends

With books, coffee, picture, smoke and friends:

A lunch enjoyed, a picture off the run,

A friend engaging, these are all his fun.

And if (but when?) he dashes off on a spree,

Well, what matters it

to you or me?

For those enjoying matrimonial bliss, he has the following parody of Wordsworth:

The wife is too much

with us: late and soon,

Getting and spending

she lays waste our powers

Little she leaves in

the pocket that is ours;

We have given our purse

away, a dubious boon!

PARODYING FAMOUS authors is Yadurajan's forte. Here is a modern Polonius advice to his son:

My son, if thou wouldst advance high in life

And live in comfort, keep these few maxims

Well in mind. Give thy thoughts no tongue

But if you must, speak in a two-fold voice

Saying one thing and intending another.

Be thou familiar, as occasion requires

Stand not on ceremony but cultivate everyone

Who matter and ditch them when thy purpose is served.

And this above all: to thine own self be true.

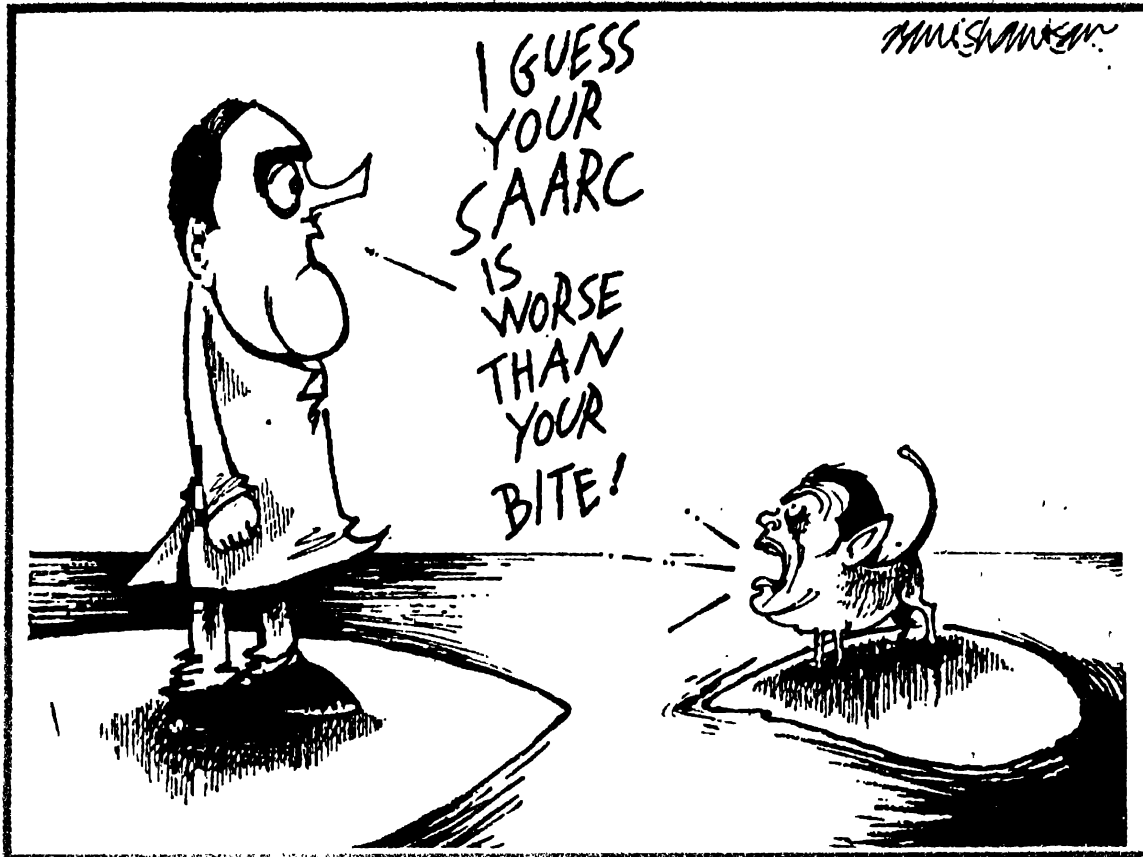
Mark also; the ripe fruit falls to the ground ~

But a balloon filled with hot air rises high

So waste not time in study. Keep your head light.

It is not what you know that matters

But whom you know. ■



RAVI SHANKAR / THE TELEGRAPH

Will Mr Rajiv Gandhi send his troops to America tomorrow to solve their problems? Go and ask him to stop poking his nose in Sri Lanka and take his army back to solve the problems in India.

RANJAN WIJERATNE, Sri Lankan foreign affairs and defence minister, replying to the question whether peace can be maintained in the north and the east without the IPKF

As far as I am concerned, as home minister, my first priority is to curb terrorism.

BUTA SINGH, Union home minister, on the Punjab problem

All these leaders are jealous of me. They are naturally unnerved by my popularity. I have proved that I have enough grassroot support to go ahead with my programmes, without help from others.

JAGANNATH MISHRA, PCC(I) president

Please do not force me (to stay on). You are free to decide who the next general secretary is.

MS JAYALALITHA, AIADMK general secretary

Madame (Ms Jayalalitha) had said she would not leave politics as long as Mr Karunanidhi was active.

S. K. R. VISWANATHAN, AIADMK member

If Devi Lal says he does not know me, it is not his fault. He is suffering from senility, and as power has gone to his head, he is unable to recognise even himself, let alone others. In fact he recognises only his sons and relatives.

HARIKESH BAHADUR, Janata Dal national executive member, on Devi Lal's statement that he does not know who Harikesh Bahadur is

It is difficult to sit in Delhi and pass judgement.

INDRAJIT GUPTA, CPI leader, on the developments in China

There is no such irresponsible Opposition in any other country in the world.

GHULAM NABI AZAD, general secretary of the Congress(I)

People have always criticised me for whatever I have done. Basically anything new or original takes time to evolve... It is not like Madonna or Osibisa. I am not doing mediocre stuff.

L. SHANKAR, musician

It amuses me when people come up and say 'I told you so'... They make me feel that I've made no contribution at all to whatever I've achieved.

MADHURI DIXIT, actress

Women are basically whores. Those who say they are not are lying. And even the few who aren't wish they were. All men are bastards. There are no exceptions. There is no such thing as a nice man.

PAMELLA BORDES, alleged call girl



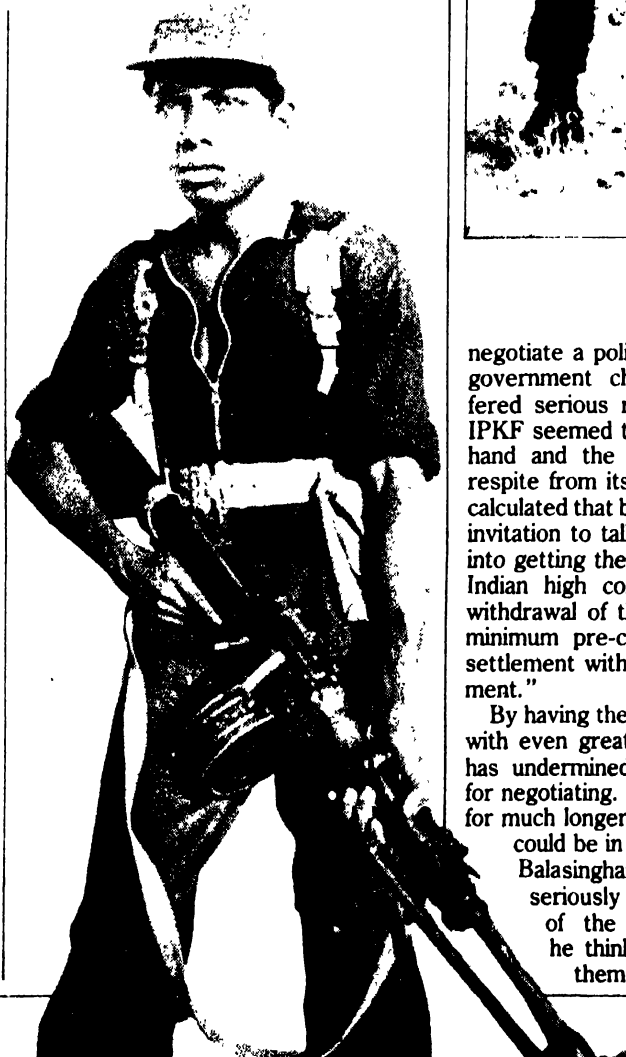
POWER GAMES

As India flexes its muscles, Sri Lanka finds the going tough

The heat is on. And India, from all appearances, is in no mood to turn it off in a hurry. At the end of last week, the Indian strategy for dealing with Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa's embarrassing demand—that the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) be pulled out by end-July—became clear. Sensing that repeated refusals were not enough, New Delhi decided that the best way of forcing Premadasa to either drop the demand or discuss the withdrawal issue was to turn the screws on him.

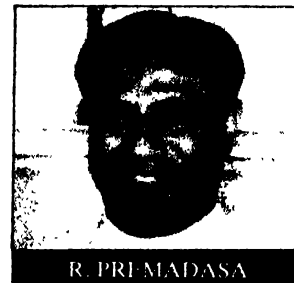
In the island's north and east, the IPKF came down hard on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in what even officials at the Indian high commission in Colombo admitted was, rather blandly described as, "an intensified operation". The tempo of the offensive, which has accounted for the lives of some 100 Tigers over the last fortnight or so, was maintained even after Premadasa asked Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, on 28 June, to call off IPKF operations against the LTTE. Says Auton Balasingham, the militant organisation's political adviser and spokesman, "The Indian army has resorted to indiscriminate shelling and stepped up its search and destroy missions. The current operation has destroyed many villages and killed innocent civilians."

The Indian tactic of increasing military pressure was not aimed so much at embarrassing Premadasa, as forcing him to climb down. The LTTE agreed to



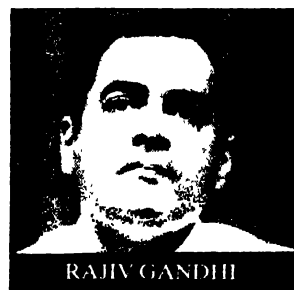
negotiate a political settlement with his government chiefly because it has suffered serious reverses this year. The IPKF seemed to have gained the upper hand and the Tigers badly needed a respite from its operations. The LTTE calculated that by accepting Premadasa's invitation to talk, it could pressure him into getting the IPKF to leave. Says an Indian high commission official, "The withdrawal of the IPKF is the LTTE's minimum pre-condition for reaching a settlement with the Sri Lankan government."

By having the IPKF attack the Tigers with even greater determination, India has undermined the LTTE's rationale for negotiating. If the offensive goes on for much longer, the future of the talks could be in jeopardy. The LTTE's Balasingham admits that it "could seriously impede the progress" of the talks, although he says he thinks there is no danger of them being discontinued on



R. PREMADASA

The Indian tactic of attacking the Tigers with greater determination was not aimed so much at embarrassing Premadasa, as forcing him to climb down



RAJIV GANDHI

this count. But many political observers believe otherwise and suggest that they could easily break down. For one, it is hard to conceive that an organisation will continue to talk to a government which cannot provide it the very minimum—security. Secondly, it is going to become increasingly difficult for the LTTE leadership to justify its decision to its cadres. "It is going to be a problem," admits a senior United National Party (UNP) member. "How long will the boys tolerate their leaders talking to the government out of a five-star hotel in Colombo, while they themselves are being killed?"

By endangering the future of the talks, India has brought a lot of pressure on Premadasa. His political strategy towards returning the island to normalcy hinges on bringing the LTTE around. Premadasa believes that a political settlement with the LTTE will allow him to turn his full attention to what has now become a more immediate and pressing problem—the reign of terror let loose by the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). That by securing the northern front, as it were, he could deal effectively with

the southern one.

Apart from threatening a possible *rapprochement* with the Tigers, the recent IPKF offensive affected Premadasa in other ways. Reports in the Sri Lankan press and rumours in Colombo had it that India flew in additional army personnel last week. Although New Delhi has denied doing so, such reports have given a handle to his critics to argue that Premadasa has botched the issue of the presence of the IPKF by summarily asking it to go. Many now believe that the Indian army will not leave by the end of December—the deadline New Delhi says it set for the IPKF's departure in consultation with the Sri Lankan government. And Premadasa is blamed for this—the very man who demanded the IPKF's withdrawal is now held responsible for it staying on. Premadasa had also hoped that calling for the IPKF's exit would both appease the JVP and take some of the wind out of its virulent anti-India campaign. While it is arguable that he could have achieved these objectives had New Delhi agreed to pull out by end-July, there is little

doubt that the Indian response has dashed all such hopes.

It is difficult to say whether India succeeded in getting the Sri Lankan government worried, but initially there were some indications that Premadasa had softened his stand. His last public speech—delivered on 4 July at the close of the 11-day Gam Udawa, a rural development scheme—was markedly different from his previous ones. There were no direct references to the Indian government, no calls for the IPKF to leave by end-July and, by his standards, hardly any India-baiting. Most of the speech, in fact, was devoted to the troubles in the south and his efforts to bring the LTTE around. There were flashes of the old Premadasa though. He held New Delhi responsible for fostering the Tamil militant movement: "You know what happened in the north and east. From where did our people get that help and assistance to attack our own people? Now they themselves (the Tamils) say that certain quarters gave them weapons, provided them protec-

tion, gave them money and so on." There was also a veiled accusation that Indian intelligence agencies were trying to disrupt the administration and foment internal strife.

On the same day, Rajiv Gandhi announced in New Delhi that he had received a letter from Premadasa. Saying that India was prepared to hold talks with Sri Lanka to draw up a schedule for the withdrawal of troops, Rajiv described Premadasa's latest mis-sive as "more positive than the previous one". Although he did not divulge the contents of the letter, many believed that this was a clear indication that Premadasa was willing to be more accommodating and that he had weakened in the face of Indian pressure.

It was a widely-held belief for a short while—that is, until two days later (6 July), when foreign minister Ranjan Wijeratne held his weekly press briefing on decisions taken by the Cabinet. If Wijeratne, who was at his combative and abrasive best during the briefing, was to be believed, then the Sri Lankan government had not climbed down at all. "The



His critics claim Premadasa has botched the issue of the IPKF withdrawal by summarily asking it to go

President will not back down on the 29 July deadline," he announced. He also said he would not go to India for talks and when asked whether Premadasa would accept an invitation from Rajiv to visit New Delhi for consultations, he replied, "I don't think so." The foreign minister went on to say, "If they (the Indians) want to talk, they will have to send somebody here."

When asked whether Sri Lanka was planning to raise the issue of the IPKF's continued presence in international

forums like the United Nations, Wijeratne replied, "We have not considered that." But he confirmed India's worst fears about Sri Lanka's boycott of the forthcoming SAARC summit. "Until the last Indian soldier leaves Lanka, we will not participate," he declared. Analysts believe that this could be the beginning of the end for a foreign policy initiative that India has taken great pride in.

Despite all this, it was Sri Lanka's domestic crisis that had more people concerned and grabbed most of the headlines. The JVP-supported public transport strike entered its fourth week, virtually crippling normal life in the island. The government's efforts to provide a skeleton bus service with the help of the army has been of little help and attendance at government offices and private establishments remains dismally low. For some time now, trains have also not been running. Says a railway department spokesman, "We have not been able to operate passenger trains, but we expect to operate a few

"Indian mediation has failed"

The LTTE's political adviser, Anton Balasingham, on why the Tigers agreed to talk to Colombo

The LTTE's spokesman and political adviser, Anton Balasingham, heads the team that is currently negotiating



with the Sri Lankan government.

A Ph.D. from London's Goldsmith College, Balasingham teamed up with Prabhakaran in 1978 after the two first met in Madras. "Prabhakaran needed a theoretician to formulate the LTTE's ideological position then," he recalls. In this interview, he explains the reasons for the LTTE's willingness to negotiate with Colombo and admits that the Tigers are willing to give up the Eelam demand for a satisfactory political deal.

SUNDAY: After so many years of militancy, why did the LTTE suddenly decide to negotiate with the Sri Lankan government?

Anton Balasingham: We were involved in the process of negotiations before—with Indian mediation at the Thimphu discussions. But, you are correct, this is the first time—after 15 years of guerrilla warfare—that we are involved in direct talks with the Sri Lankan government.

As far as we are concerned, Indian mediation has failed. And the accord

has failed to bring peace and normalcy to the island. At the same time, Premadasa, immediately after assuming office, made appeals for direct talks. We made enquiries to find out whether these talks were conditional and bound by the parameters of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. When we were given the impression that they were unconditional, we decided to go ahead. India has never invited us for talks without pre-conditions. So, we decided to talk to the President.

Has Premadasa's government been more accommodating than India?

Of course. We are very pleased with the progress of the talks. There is a growing mutual trust and understanding on both sides. With India, we were under pressure all the time...under threat...intimidation. There was no mutual respect. This is different.

The talks are being held to find a place for the LTTE within the democratic framework. However, it has not given up the demand for Eelam. How can negotiations between a separatist group and a government which is committed to keeping the nation united ever hope to succeed?

goods trains despite the strike."

But it is the situation at Colombo's port that is most worrying. Given the low attendance due to the bus strike and the JVP's directive that no lorry should enter the harbour area for either loading or unloading cargo, the port has virtually become non-functional. Of special concern is the cargo on the 'food ships' which have been anchored off the port for days now. Last week, the Opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Lakshman Jayakody stated in Parliament that the country was faced by an imminent food crisis. "We have only food reserves for three weeks," he said. Prices have been spiralling up and the inflation rate is pegged by some experts as anything between 25 and 40 per cent. Says Malthripala Senanayake, another SLFP MP, "When we look at the country, we find that there is no government. There is a state of anarchy."

Apart from the economic crisis, there are the routine killings of policemen, politicians and ordinary people by what the government calls "subversives" (read: JVP extremists). On an average,

It is true that the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE have their entrenched positions. But the talks started without pre-conditions. And this means that you don't start negotiating without entrenched positions. We understand Sri Lanka's position. It understands ours. And so we are talking on areas of mutual concern.

Like the presence of the IPKF...

Yes. There are also other things. Sri Lanka, like the LTTE, wants the restoration of peace and normalcy and we are confident that a political settlement is possible.

In other words, the LTTE is prepared to give up Eelam if the right concessions are made?

Let me put it this way. When we are in the process of talking, it is unfair for either side to say, "Give up your entrenched positions and talk." We must arrive at an amicable settlement to talk about a renunciation of entrenched positions.

The question is whether the demand for Eelam will be dropped if a satisfactory political deal is struck.

If a satisfactory arrangement is reached and our people are satisfied, we have to consider giving up the demand for Eelam, of course.

Are the talks in danger of



(From above) Tigers in the Vavuniya jungles: on their way to Colombo for talks; Anton Balasingham with his wife: leader of the LTTE delegation; negotiating with Premadasa: "pleased with the progress"



being jeopardised because of the continuing IPKF offensive?

Of course. Definitely.

Will the talks break down if the offensive continues?

I don't think so. But it will be a serious impediment to the progress of the talks.

Interviewed by Mukund Padmanabhan/Colombo

there are about 15 such deaths every day. On 2 July, a daring grenade attack on the Gam Udawa site in the hill town of Mahiyangana killed one and injured 38. On the 5th, two police officers who were engaged in intelligence work and a provincial council member were shot dead. And on the following day as many as 22 people were killed in the southern region of the island. "We are living in the era of the front-page obituary" is how Cabinet minister Gamini Disanayake

describes the spate of violence.

The government has now decided (to use Wijeratne's expression) that "enough is enough" and made up its mind to come down hard on the "subversives". Over the last week, large numbers of JVP members and sympathisers were rounded up and detained for questioning. Says Wijeratne, "The government is going to meet the threat from the subversives head on. The armed police have been given full powers to deal with them in a ruthless manner."

On 5 July, the government imposed censorship on the local press under the regulations of the emergency, which was declared about a fortnight ago. A team of four bureaucrats, including the director of information, Mrs Manal Abeyratne, was appointed "competent authorities" or the official censors. The decision followed a meeting of the UNP Parliamentary Group, during which rul-

ing party MPs asked President Premadasa to adopt a hard line in dealing with the crisis.

On the face of it, the decision to clamp down on the Sri Lankan press appeared rather odd, as it has traditionally been friendly and uncritical of the government. But Colombo was less worried about adverse editorial comment than the publication of JVP press releases, which the newspapers always accommodate for fear of reprisals. Moreover, censorship would give the Sri Lankan army and police the cover they need for what is going to be a bloody and no-holds-barred offensive against the JVP.

The following day, censorship was extended to foreign correspondents too, indicating that the government was also concerned about reports on Sri Lanka's diplomatic crisis. Threatened Ranjan Wijeratne at a press briefing, "If you

(foreign correspondents) violate the censorship rules, I will cancel your visas." (The penalty for Sri Lankan journalists, he made it clear, was jail.)

The censorship decision has been criticised by the Opposition. Says Dinesh Gunawardene of the leftist Mahajana Eksath Peramuna, which has something of a soft spot for the JVP, "It will only serve to aggravate the present situation and create a bad impression abroad." Agrees A. Amrithalingam of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), "It is an attempt to keep the public in the dark and is bound to prove counter-productive." SLFP leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who recently returned from a long stay abroad, was scathing in a parliamentary intervention during which she called for an early debate on the emergency measures. She said that the country was "plagued

THE RAJIV-PREMASASA LETTERS

On 7 July, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, D.B. Wijetunge, tabled the texts of all the letters exchanged between President R. Premadasa and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the IPKF controversy. The correspondence was made public following a question by an MP who asked Wijetunge whether he was prepared to place the letters before Parliament and "if not, why". Premadasa's decision to table the exchanges is directed at convincing the people that he is serious about wanting the Indian army to leave. Said a high-ranking bureaucrat in the President's secretariat to SUNDAY: "There was a feeling that the government was privately talking 'soft' to India while taking a hard line at home. The President wants to dispel that impression."

2 JUNE, 1989: One day after his surprise announcement—demanding that the IPKF pull out—Premadasa writes to Rajiv. The four-page letter, which reiterates his desire to see "all IPKF personnel withdrawn from Sri Lanka by 31 July, 1989" makes the following observations:

- that an IPKF pull-out was "one of the important campaign pledges" he made during both the presidential and parliamentary elections;
- that withdrawal will "enable Sri Lanka to host the SAARC summit in November this year in a climate of

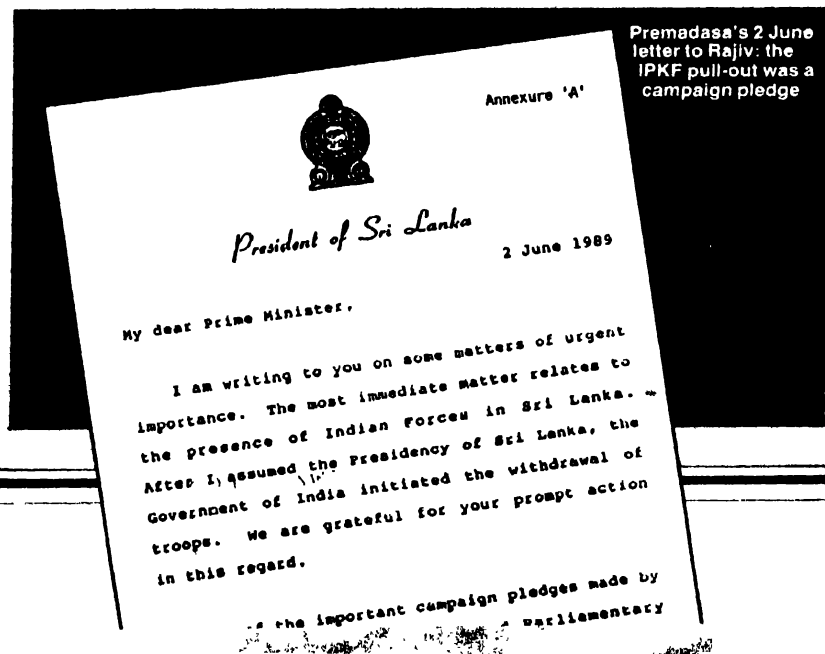
tranquillity";

- that the replacement of the July 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan accord with a friendship treaty would serve to strengthen bilateral relations;
- that he is grateful for the brave efforts of the IPKF, which has lost many men while discharging its duties.

20 JUNE: Rajiv replies over a fortnight later. He writes that India is committed to both the unity of Sri Lanka and the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. He points out that the withdrawal of the IPKF began even before Premadasa asked for it and says, "It will not stay a day longer than necessary." However, he argues that the withdrawal is linked

to the assurances given by Colombo under the accord that powers would be devolved on the provincial councils and that legitimate Tamil aspirations would be met. The Prime Minister suggests that the two countries draw up a schedule for implementing the accord and withdrawing the IPKF. He adds that dates could be fixed for discussing the friendship treaty.

28 JUNE: Premadasa sends a short telex message informing Rajiv that the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE have declared "a complete cessation of hostilities". The annexure to the Indo-Sri Lankan accord clearly states that the IPKF may be invited to the island to "enforce and guarantee cessation of hostilities".





An IPKF pull-out now would almost certainly result in a bloodbath between the various Tamil groups. And Rajiv Gandhi can scarcely afford to face the electorate as a PM who left the island in a bloody mess

The IPKF in Jaffna: a fragile peace

The suggestion is that the IPKF is not required now as hostilities are over. Premadasa asks Rajiv to ensure that the IPKF offensive against the LTTE is called off as it will "prejudice the negotiations under progress".

30 JUNE: Premadasa sends a long reply to Rajiv's 20 June letter. He writes that "he cannot accept the contention that the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement, including the devolution of powers on the provincial councils, is in anyway linked" to the IPKF's presence. The President says the accord does not envisage the IPKF staying on in the event of the President asking it to go and claims that it came to the island only at Sri Lanka's request.

Premadasa contends that the delay in implementing some provisions of the accord is related to the IPKF's inability to maintain peace in the north and east. He charges that Tamils are being forcibly conscripted by militant groups friendly to India and then provided training by the IPKF.

30 JUNE: Rajiv advances the debatable argument that hostilities between Colombo and the LTTE ended as early as 30 July, 1987—the day that the Sri Lankan armed forces were confined to barracks in the north and east in accordance with the agreement. The contention is that the accord provides for a cessation of

hostilities between the various Tamil groups and that the IPKF "has a mandate" to guarantee and ensure this. He hopes that the LTTE will surrender arms and renounce violence and says that a cessation of hostilities will be meaningless without this.

4 JULY: The last letter which Rajiv—for reasons best known to himself—described as Premadasa's most "positive", is far more direct and blunt than the others. Premadasa writes that "any interpretation of the agreement which seeks to provide a mandatory role for the Government of India or its armed forces within Sri Lanka... would constitute a serious interference in the internal affairs of a friendly sovereign country and a gross violation of international law. I am sure such is not your intention." He argues:

- that hostilities between the LTTE and the government did not cease in 1987 as Rajiv had made out but only this month. He points out that hundreds of policemen and civilians were killed between July 1987 and June this year;

- that India has failed to either disarm the LTTE or bring them around to the negotiating table despite two years of trying;

- that the security of Sri Lankan citizens is the sole responsibility of his government. And that, in any case, the IPKF failed to provide this.

with the worst crisis since Independence" and called for a no-confidence motion against the government.

The Opposition plans to hold a meeting to debate the decision to impose emergency and censorship, but it is unlikely that the government will pay heed to its views. ("We will teach the Opposition how to run the country," said Wijeratne.)

At the end of last week, Premadasa appeared firmly set on a confrontationist course—with the JVP at home and with India abroad. The problems with India are possibly easier to resolve with the JVP hell-bent on the dissolution of the government. Rumours in Colombo have it that diplomatic moves are under way to find a solution to the deadline crisis. But officials at the Indian high commission say that no negotiations are taking place save the exchange of letters between Rajiv and Premadasa. What Rajiv requires is the political luxury of leaving Sri Lanka 'honourably', that is, being allowed to decide on a schedule of troop withdrawal in consultation with the Sri Lankan government. He also needs to keep the IPKF on until the general election, for a pull-out now would almost certainly result in a bloodbath between the various Tamil militant groups. And he can scarcely afford to face the electorate as a Prime Minister who left the island in a bloody mess. It is difficult to say, at this juncture, whether Premadasa will allow him either luxury. The answer could lie in how successful India is in forcing him to back off.

Mukund Padmanabhan/Colombo

EXCLUSIVE

'India is violating our sovereignty'

Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa on why he wants the Indian army out of the island

Sri Lanka's President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, unlike his predecessor J.R. Jayewardene, has always been shy of the press. Despite the critical situation that has arisen over the controversy concerning the IPKF's presence, he agreed to answer *SUNDAY's* questionnaire. This is his first interview to an Indian publication as President and one of the very few that he has granted after assuming office in January this year.

SUNDAY: During your election campaign you promised to ensure that the IPKF would leave Sri Lanka. Why did you wait until 1 June before asking India to withdraw the force?

Ranasinghe Premadasa: The UNP (United National Party) election manifesto was issued as far back as October 1988. It clearly stated that when I am elected President of Sri Lanka, the IPKF will be called upon to withdraw, if not withdrawn earlier. This was en-

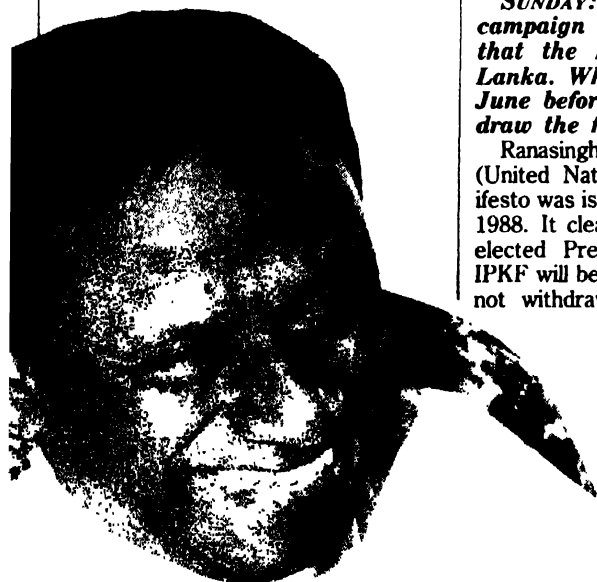
dorsed both at the presidential and the parliamentary elections. I expected India to take meaningful steps to withdraw the IPKF in deference to the wishes of the vast majority of our people and the government. In fact, India commenced the withdrawal of the IPKF soon after I assumed office. But, the withdrawal process has not taken place as anticipated. Therefore, I had no alternative but to request the Prime Minister of India to take steps to expedite the process and, if possible, complete the withdrawal by the end of July 1989.

The Indian response to your demand must have disappointed you. Why do you think the Indian government, which earlier said that the IPKF is there at the President's request, now appears bent on keeping the force in Sri Lanka?

This is a question that should be posed to the Indian government. However, in terms of the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement, the IPKF is here at the invitation of the President of Sri Lanka. Therefore, the IPKF should leave when called upon to do so by me.

Your foreign minister, Ranjan Wijeratne, said in Parliament on 31 March, 1989, that the IPKF was pulling out and would withdraw completely by December this year. Why then was it necessary to ask it to leave earlier?

Since I assumed office on 2 January, 1989, 7,000 to 8,000 troops have been withdrawn. There are an estimated 50,000 troops yet to be withdrawn. The



President Premadasa:
"realisation will dawn
sooner or later"





presence of Indian armed forces on Sri Lankan soil without our approval amounts to a violation of the sovereignty of our people. It also amounts to an interference in our internal affairs.

Do you think—as has been suggested in the press, both in Sri Lanka and India—that it would have been more appropriate to brief India before asking the IPKF to leave by 29 July, 1989?

In the context of my election pledge endorsed by the people of our country at two elections, it would have been quite

“Sri Lanka does not have the military strength to fight any of our neighbours. We have to rely on moral courage and gentle persuasion”



An IPKF soldier

appropriate for India to have speedily withdrawn the IPKF without any further briefing.

How do you react to the suggestion that you asked the IPKF to leave chiefly in order to ‘defuse’ the JVP campaign and prevent them from using the ‘India card’ for political gain?

My request for the withdrawal of the IPKF was to honour a pledge I gave to my people. It should not be related to other political developments in Sri Lanka.

There is a feeling that an IPKF

“My request for the withdrawal of the IPKF was to honour a pledge I gave to my people. It should not be related to other political developments in Sri Lanka”

pull-out now will lead to even more violence. It has been said that the Sri Lankan army is not strong enough to maintain law and order in both the north and the south. What do you feel about this?

With the conciliatory measures that my government has taken recently, the withdrawal of the IPKF will not, in my view, result in more violence in the island. I am hopeful that the country will have peace in the near future, particularly with the LTTE coming into the democratic mainstream.

What progress have the talks with the LTTE made? Is it true that there has been no agreement on substantive issues?

The talks with the LTTE have gone on without any pre-conditions being imposed on either side. Hence my government is quite satisfied about the progress made so far. Details of these discussions will be announced after we reach an agreement on substantive issues.

The IPKF recently intensified its offensive against the LTTE. Do you think this could jeopardise the talks?

Now that the LTTE has assured a cessation of hostilities against the Government of Sri Lanka and the people of Sri Lanka, it is nothing but correct that I take action to stop the IPKF's offensive against the LTTE. Our talks with the LTTE have not been jeopardised by offensive action on the part of the IPKF.

Are you planning to raise the question of the IPKF's continued presence in Sri Lanka in international forums such as the United Nations and the International Court of Justice?

I do not visualise such a situation. How can a country which produced such great men like Lord Buddha, Emperor Dharma Ashoka and Mahatma Gandhi create a situation whereby a small country like Sri Lanka is compelled to raise any issue at international forums against India?

How do you plan to deal with the situation if India continues to refuse to pull the IPKF out?

Sri Lanka does not have the fourth largest army in the world nor does it have the military strength to fight any of our neighbours. We have to rely on moral courage and gentle persuasion. I do not subscribe to the theory that ‘might is right’. I firmly believe that ‘right is might’. Therefore, I am sure that the truth will prevail in the end and realisation will dawn sooner or later.

**Interviewed by Mukund Padmanabhan/
Colombo**

Premadasa cuts his nose

Just to spite India. And may get a civil war

Will Sri Lanka become India's Afghanistan? When India despatched the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka two years ago, it had not expected events to take such a turn. The hostility of the Sinhala chauvinists to the IPKF was expected. But what India had not bargained for was the opposition of the Tamil Tigers. Not only had India helped the LTTE to establish its pre-eminence among Tamil nationalist groups, it had also got the best possible deal for the Tamils under the terms of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. But the Tigers had turned man-eaters.

The Bangladesh operation in 1971 was conducted under the supervision of bureaucrats like P.N. Haksar and D.P. Dhar, who ensured that Mukti Bahini, the armed wing of Mujibur Rehman's

The Bangladesh operation in 1971 was conducted under the supervision of bureaucrats like P.N. Haksar and D.P. Dhar, who ensured that Mukti Bahini, the armed wing of Mujibur Rehman's National Awami Party, received political education along with military training. Left intellectuals like Mohit Sen conducted study circles with Mukti Bahini volunteers. As a result, they acquired secular and democratic values.

The LTTE operation was left to M.G. Ramachandran, the former chief minister of Tamil Nadu, and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). It was later discovered that some foreign agents had penetrated the RAW wing dealing with the Tigers. Lacking a secular and democratic political education, the Tigers practised the cult of violence and showed racist tendencies. They often killed innocent Sinhala women and children and eliminated members of rival Tamil nationalist groups. India virtually coerced the Tigers to accept the accord. But, their racist views and belief in violence came in the way and, finally, the LTTE rejected the agreement.

When the Tigers turned against the accord, the IPKF was caught in the cross-fire between Tamil and Sinhala racists. The former Sri Lankan President, Junius Jayewardene, agreed to the induction of the IPKF under pressure from India. The ordinary Sinhala nationalist found it difficult to accept the presence of foreign forces in his country. It was not easy for him to appreciate that this was the result of a problem of his own making.

After Independence, Sinhala nationalism did not accommodate Tamil sentiments. Tamils were even denied the right to learn their mother-tongue in government schools. They finally rebelled, and Colombo resorted to a genocide of Tamils. When Bengalis in East Pakistan were in the same situation, India intervened. Similarly, India could not

remain a passive spectator as Tamils in Sri Lanka were killed. As early as in 1983, Indira Gandhi had events in Sri Lanka in mind when she told the first meeting of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) foreign ministers, "Ours is a troubled region. Most of our countries are multi-racial and multi-religious. It would be idle to pretend that we are not affected by what happens elsewhere." The message to Colombo was unmistakable.

Unlike his predecessor, President Premadasa does not seem to realise Sri Lanka's inherent problems. He has adopted a short-sighted strategy of exploiting Sinhala nationalist sentiments by asking the IPKF to leave. In the process, the Sinhala-racist group, the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), has gained the upper hand. Premadasa has found an opportunity to ally with the Tigers, whose game plan is to get the IPKF to leave so that they can settle scores with other Tamil groups who have gained in strength since the signing of the accord.

In the face of Premadasa's insistence, India will, perhaps, have to agree to a phased withdrawal of the IPKF. But this will imply an escalation of Tamil extremism in the north and the east at a time when the JVP is already calling the shots in the south. This could lead to a civil war in Sri Lanka. In that case, India's sympathy

would lie with the Tamils. And India is powerful enough to ensure that Sri Lanka does not get help from outside elements hostile to it.

As the experience of the last two years has shown, the rest of the world is not going to get unduly worked up over India's role in the Sri Lankan imbroglio. Thus, whether the IPKF remains or not, chances are that only the nature of India's involvement will change. By insisting that the IPKF leaves, Premadasa seems to be cutting off his nose to spite India. ■



The IPKF: will India agree to a phased withdrawal?

President Premadasa does not seem to realise Sri Lanka's inherent problems. He has adopted a short-sighted strategy of exploiting Sinhala nationalist sentiments

Constitutional coercion

The Congress(I)'s move to force parties to delink religion from politics is unlikely to succeed

When the Congress(I) amended its constitution on 10 May this year, few considered it significant. The paragraph that was added to the party constitution sounded so innocuous that the entire exercise seemed redundant. It said that the Congress(I) "shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy, and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India". The exercise was, however, crucial. For, the amended 'Representation of the People Act' now requires every political party wanting to contest elections to register itself with the Election Commission. And this registration will be given only if the political party incorporates the crucial paragraph in its constitution.

Had Union home minister Buta Singh not made a provocative statement on 3 July in Jalandhar saying that if the Akalis failed to amend their constitution, they would not be allowed to participate in the elections, nobody would have really paid much attention to the new procedure. Even though some Opposition parties had reservations about the wisdom of forcing every political party to tender this undertaking, they quietly made the necessary changes. And, 14 August happens to be the last date for submitting applications to the Election Commission for registration. The CPI(M) at its last central committee meeting amended its constitution and the BJP has called an emergency meeting of its national council on 23 July specifically for this purpose. Buta Singh, however, chose to assume that the Akalis would not do the same.

Why the Union home minister went out of his way to take a swipe at the Akalis is not clear. What is however amply clear is that it created a lot of avoidable confusion and unnecessarily queered the pitch. The Akalis initially reacted in predictable anger. Only later did they realise that the paragraph which should be added to their constitution does not contain anything against their ideology. The only problem is that the

Akalis feel the paragraph will serve to undermine the religious underpinning of their party constitution.

Says Harcharan Singh, former Akal Takht chief and presently an executive committee member of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Talwandi): "So far as affirming our faith in the Indian Constitution and the ideals of socialism, secularism and

democracy is concerned, we have no problem. I have been a metropolitan councillor and I have sworn by the Indian Constitution. Prakash Singh Badal or Surjit Singh Barnala have been chief ministers and have expressed their faith in the Constitution. We are a secular party and whenever we have been in power in Punjab, communal tension has



Badal and Barnala with other leaders;
(Inset) Buta Singh: provoking the Akalis



been at its lowest contrary to the record of the Congress regimes. But if we are asked to give in writing that we separate religion from politics, then we can never accept this. Elections or no elections, we cannot give up our religion under any circumstances."

The general secretary of the Unified Akali Dal, Manjit Singh Calcutta, has also reportedly expressed similar views on the issue. In a statement issued in Amritsar, he termed Buta Singh's remark as part of a "deep-rooted conspiracy to defame" the entire Sikh community and its representative party, the Shir-



Rajiv Gandhi in a temple in Tamil Nadu: all for secularism

Janata leader Syed Shahabuddin feels that a government which is hardly secular has no right to talk about delinking religion from politics



omani Akali Dal. Calcutta claimed that the Akali Dal was a secular party firmly committed to the principles of democracy and which is not against the unity and integrity of the country. He has, however, left the question open as to whether the Akali Dal would amend its constitution or not.

Akali Dal press secretary Bakshi Jagdev Singh points out that if the Akalis agree to the principle of separating religion from politics, the *raison d'être* of the Akali Dal disappears. Says Singh: "If we segregate the two, then we can easily be members of the Congress(I) or the communist parties. The fact that we are Akalis shows that we believe in the ideal of *miri* and *piri*. However, it does not mean that we are communal or that we do not believe in upholding the country's unity and integrity."

The Election Commission has so far

maintained a studied silence on the Union home minister's statement. A senior official of the commission declined to be drawn into any controversy saying that since the Election Commission was a quasi-judicial body, it could not react to any such statement. He also refused to divulge the names of the parties which had so far submitted their applications for registration after making suitable changes in their constitutions.

There is no doubt that the amendment may pose certain problems for some political parties. The BJP general secretary, K.L. Sharma, feels that political parties should not be forced to do things in a democratic set-up which gives freedom of association and beliefs. "Suppose there is a party today like the Swatantra Party. How can you force such a party to swear by socialism? So far as the ideals of democracy and secularism are con-

cerned, everybody has to have faith in them. But socialism does not fall into that category."

Sharma maintains that merely because a concept is incorporated in the Constitution of India, it does not become sacrosanct and one should have a right to work towards changing certain aspects of the Constitution. However, he hastens to add that so far as his party is concerned, it does not have any problem in amending its constitution along the lines specified by the Election Commission. Yet, it views the provision as an "infringement" on the rights of political parties.

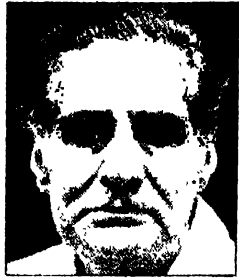
The CPI(M), which had opposed the amendment in Parliament, too, shares a similar view. Prakash Karat, a member of the party's central committee and secretariat, says: "So far as we are concerned, we are most comfortably placed as the amendment totally coincides with our beliefs. We believe in democracy, socialism and secularism and will spare no efforts to uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the country. So we have no problem. But we do feel that it is wrong to force a party like the BJP or the Muslim League to swear by secularism. One cannot promote such ideals through these formal, legal methods. This can only be done in political practice."

Babri Masjid Action Committee convenor and Janata Party leader, Syed Shahabuddin draws attention to the fact that the government itself does not practise secularism. Asks Shahabuddin: "Does breaking coconuts to receive an aircraft not amount to mixing religion with politics? When Union minister H.K.L. Bhagat attended a Sañatan Dharm Sabha meeting recently in Delhi, was he not mixing politics with religion? But if I stand up on the Prophet's Day and quote his saying that the highest form of *jehad* is to tell the truth before a tyrant, then I will be mixing politics with religion. There are so many laws in the statute book and one more has been added. That's all."

In a sense, the acerbic Shahabuddin is right. If parties like the BJP, Muslim League and Akali Dal all swear by secularism and socialism, then the concepts lose their meaning. In any case, the stand of the Congress(I) and the government has all along been that secularism in the Indian context does not mean separating religion from politics but peaceful coexistence of all religions. Whether the amendment will be able to bring this ideal any closer to reality remains doubtful.

Kuldeep Kumar/New Delhi

Callous Centre



Why was the government so indifferent to the junior doctors' demands?

KULDIP NAYAR

The annual assessment by the Intelligence Bureau in 1988 states that "students and the youth did not pose major law and order problems". This does not come as a surprise because, generally, the youth have been showing great restraint.

The recent 48-day strike by junior doctors in Delhi is a case in point. Never was there any suggestion of these medicos turning violent even when they were dismissed, all 3,500 of them. Not even when the government resorted to pressure tactics, like cutting off the supply of water and electricity to hostels, putting an extra lock to keep the women doctors away from their rooms, closure of messes, etc. They did not abandon the path of conciliation even when Cabinet secretary Seshan said: "Young men, the doors for talks are closed now." It is unfortunate that even Ram Niwas Mirdha, the Union health minister, one of those who believe in fair play, should preside over a machinery which is all for suppression of any kind of protest.

In the doctors' case, the government went back on its own written agreement of 1986. When there was a similar strike by junior doctors in central government institutions and hospitals, the health ministry had agreed that "remuneration will be subject to revision as and when remuneration of other government servants is raised..." (Clause D of the agreement). In 1987 the ministry raised the non-practising allowance (NPA) of the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) doctors after the strike from Rs 250 to Rs 600 and also gave them dearness allowance on it. The junior doctors want the same benefits as promised to them under the 1986 agreement. The government was willing to give only Rs 400 more.

Had the government accepted the demand, the burden would have come to Rs 1.8 crores, which is less than 50

per cent of the money allocated for the Nehru centenary celebrations this year. I do not want to underline the ridiculous stand that the government has taken by citing examples of wasteful expenditure. I am more concerned over the attitude of the government, the public and even the Supreme Court towards the junior doctors' agitation.

THE GOVERNMENT tried to damn the strike by highlighting only its point of view and failed to appreciate the junior doctors' case. On one day, Doordarshan announced that government doctors in certain states were paid less than those in Delhi, but did not say that in some states they were paid more. On another day it said that the strikers were not willing to come to the negotiating table, though they were all the time waiting for the health ministry's call.

On yet another day it was reported that the doctors were trying to force the government to concede their demands at the point of a gun. But nothing was mentioned about the ministry's callous silence that forced the junior medicos to go on strike. The fact is that they, for the last one year, have been holding rallies and *dharnas*, submitting memoranda, and wearing black badges to attract the government's attention. They even went on a one-day strike and took the extreme step only when there was no response from the authorities concerned.

The heads of the institutions and hospitals should have drawn the ministry's attention to this absurdity: that the government, after having conceded the principle of parity with CGHS doctors, had gone against it. But all such people have either extension in service or some assignment to look forward to after retirement and, therefore, they tend to side with the government. Gone are the days when the head of an institution would rather resign in protest than oppose his men's genuine demands.

As for the public, it has become so immune to suffering that it does not react to injustice. It is the biggest loser because medical institutes and hospitals in Delhi, Chandigarh, Kanpur and Pondicherry are not available to it. Out of 3,000 beds these hospitals have, 90 per cent are vacant. (One bed costs the public exchequer roughly Rs 1 lakh annually.) How many people have died due to lack of medical help is difficult to say, but the number throughout the country would be substantial.

IN SUCH a case, one would have expected the Supreme Court to play an active role when the case came up before it in the shape of the junior doctors' plea for a stay order on the threat of eviction from hos-

tels. Instead, the Supreme Court emphasises the importance of the doctors' duty towards the public. No one denies the role which a doctor has to play in a society like ours. And it is indeed creditable that when there was a bomb blast at the New Delhi railway station recently, junior doctors offered their services (which the government curtly rejected).

Indian youth, by and large, are still peaceful. Perhaps it is part of Mahatma Gandhi's legacy of non-violence; perhaps it is a result of discipline at home; perhaps it is the absence of economic alternatives that the advanced countries have. Whatever it is, the government should not test the youngsters' patience or stamina unnecessarily. ■

Indian youth, by and large, are still peaceful. Perhaps, it is part of Mahatma Gandhi's legacy of non-violence. Whatever it is, the government should not test the youngsters' patience unnecessarily

GOODBYE DOESN'T MEAN FAREWELL

*Jayalalitha threatens to quit politics.
Is the threat for real or is she pulling
the same trick again?*

It is a disease that seems to afflict south Indian politicians: when in doubt, they resign. Ramakrishna Hegde turned the act of resigning into a minor art form. At critical junctures he would dramatically announce his resignation and then, after the predictable lamentations of his woe-begone partymen, would say that he had reluctantly changed his mind. Hegde's bluff was finally called, but the disease still rages on—now in the shapely person of Jayalalitha Jayaram. After recovering from one bout of the resignation illness this March, she was back in its throes last week. First, she indicated that she had finally quit politics and then, a few days later, issued a qualified rebuttal. "At the moment, I am not quitting politics," she told newsmen in Madras and refused to say more, adding enigmatically, "I have chosen the words I want and that is all I can say now."

The lady kept her fans guessing. She refused to categorically state that she would continue in politics. "How can I answer that? I may even meet with an accident tomorrow," she said. The latest episode in the long-running Jayalalitha melodrama had her supporters holding their breath in suspense and shocked leaders of her party, the AIADMK, and the Congress(I). For, on this fickle lady depends the very existence of the AIADMK and the outcome of the Congress(I)'s plans for defeating chief minister Karunanidhi's pro-V.P. Singh DMK party in the next general election.

But Jayalalitha appeared more intent on swaddling herself in mystery than calming panic-stricken politicians. Instead of scotching the rumours about her poor health and intra-party problems and explaining her periodic disappearances from public view, she turned coy: "I am 41 years old and am not a child. If I have remained aloof and not chosen to meet people, including my partymen, for some time, there are certain reasons which I do not have to divulge..." Not surprisingly, Jayalalitha's latest explanations obscured more than they clarified: was the lady merely play-acting or was there something more serious afoot?

Jayalalitha turned secretive about two months ago. Her residence at Poes Gardens became something of a cloister and out of bounds for even her own partymen. Just when there was speculation that the lady was about to re-emerge, there came the sudden announcement like a bolt from the blue. On 4 July this year, six senior AIADMK functionaries were summoned to her house and curtly told by Jayalalitha: "I have had enough and I am quitting. You may elect someone as the new general

secretary and carry on. Please do not bother me..." The six men were stunned.

This time, feels a senior AIADMK deputy general secretary, who was present at the meeting, "she seems set about her decision to quit. I don't think this is like one of the many threats about leaving politics that she has held out from time to time. This one appears quite real." Most political pundits in Tamil Nadu are equally pessimistic. "I don't think Jayalalitha is going to continue in politics for long," feels Cho Ramaswamy, the influential journalist-satirist. "She is unable to have faith in any of her partymen and she is obviously



BISWANJAN RAKSHIT

Jayalalitha, paying homage to her mentor, MGR



not in the pink of health."

A senior AIADMK leader, known to be close to Jayalalitha, disclosed that she had discussed her retirement plans with him and had expressed a desire to live in Bangalore or at her vineyard near Hyderabad. "She narrated the problems she had to undergo at various stages of her personal life and told me she would like to get away," said the leader. "I felt very sad for her, but pleaded she should continue as leader of the AIADMK since we are in a crucial post-MGR phase."

The Assembly elections held this January and two subsequent by-elections have shown that the AIADMK under the leadership of Jayalalitha com-

mands the support of about 35-40 per cent of the state's electorate. According to Cho Ramaswamy's analysis, this support stems from the fact that Jayalalitha is a rallying point for those opposed to the politics of the DMK supremo and chief minister, M. Karunanidhi. Ramaswamy and most other political observers in Madras believe that there is no other personality in the AIADMK capable of drawing on the late M.G. Ramachandran's vote-bank. This means that if the lady drops out, the AIADMK too would vanish.

The Congress(I) would also be in a dilemma. The Congress(I), Jayalalitha's AIADMK and Janaki Ramachandran's AIADMK faction fought the last Assembly elections independently and, in the process, hopelessly divided the votes. The DMK, consequently, sailed through, securing a brute majority in the Assembly despite getting as little as 33 per cent of the total vote. With general elections scheduled to be held later this year, the Congress(I) is desperate to win as many of Tamil Nadu's 39 Lok Sabha seats as possible. And the only way is through an alliance with Jayalalitha's AIADMK.

According to a section of the AIADMK, the Congress(I)—perhaps Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi himself—has prevailed upon her to wait till the Lok Sabha polls before quitting.

Jayalalitha has quite obviously struck a deal with the Congress(I). Some say she has promised Rajiv Gandhi as many as 29 of the 39 Tamil Nadu Lok Sabha seats. Recently, her unilateral decision to gift the Congress(I) a Rajya Sabha seat fuelled considerable resentment and speculation within her party. Not only did she avoid taking senior party colleagues into confidence about the issue, but also, when asked how the matter had been decided, Jayalalitha stated, "I was on the phone with Union

minister Dinesh Singh for some days before the decision was taken." Her singular dependence on the Congress(I), AIADMK insiders feel, stems from a deep-rooted fear of what the DMK leadership might do to her. It is suggested that Karunanidhi's men, bent as they are on harming her, would not stop at throwing acid to disfigure her.

All this does not, however, explain why Jayalalitha appears to be in two minds over quitting. Or why she cannot decide either way. More intriguing perhaps are the strange goings-on in her household. The latest Jayalalitha crisis (if it can be so termed) was in fact heightened by a bizarre side plot. On 5 July, the day after Jayalalitha is supposed to have told her partymen that she was quitting, S.K.R. Viswanathan, a party member who had unsuccessfully contested the Mylapore seat (in South Madras) in the last Assembly elections, filed a complaint with the Madras police chief, P. Durai, alleging that Jayalalitha was being held prisoner in her own house.

According to Viswanathan's extraordinary complaint, Jayalalitha's aide M. Natarajan along with his wife, Sashukala, were holding her in "illegal custody". Moreover, claimed Viswanathan, the lady had no rational reason for quitting politics now, especially since the two AIADMK factions had merged and an alliance with the Congress(I) had been re-established. Viswanathan felt that Jayalalitha was forced to announce her decision at the insistence of Natarajan and a small coterie around her, and it was they who prevented her from meeting partymen. To reply to these 'wild' allegations, Jayalalitha was compelled to hold a press conference the next day.

An angry Jayalalitha declared that she was the mistress of her house and "any rumours and suggestions that she was being detained as a prisoner" in her own house were "baseless and motivated". She also announced that Viswanathan, who had complained to the police, was being suspended from the party. She claimed that she had a fundamental right to privacy and she was not the first political leader to seek temporary seclusion. She added that the media reports about her quitting politics were "politically inspired and have been surfacing from time to time".

But it was obvious that she was rattled. At the press conference, she also announced that she had convened a meeting of her party legislators on 12 July. All the same, her statements could not inspire confidence. Many party members asked why she had not con-

vened a party meeting earlier and why she had waited till matters came to a head. Her aide Natarajan tried even harder to dispel suspicions. He told SUNDAY that the intelligence wing of the state police had successfully infiltrated the media and was disseminating false information through four journalists, who were in turn spreading it among their colleagues in the profession.

Natarajan's principal detractors, however, are not journalists but people who saw him at close quarters. Shanker Kumar, Jayalalitha's former aide in financial matters, insists that Natarajan executed "several unusual financial transactions due to his predominant position in Madam's household". He says that "these people" (Natarajan and gang), who have acquired a strong foothold in her household, are currently busy disposing of party vehicles, including a recently-acquired propaganda van. Kumar had brought these things to Jayalalitha's notice and recalls, "She was upset then, but in course of time, Natarajan once again established his hold." Kumar ultimately left because of differences with Natarajan.

Natarajan's influence over Jayalalitha has dismayed a large section of the



party. Most upsetting apparently was the way the nephew of Natarajan's wife closed down the AIADMK newspaper, *Namadhu MGR*. On 6 June, the nephew, Dinakaran, arrived at the newspaper office, announced that Madam (Jayalalitha) had ordered the immediate closure of the paper and told the employees to go home. "I don't know why the closure was ordered," says the paper's editor,

P.N. Ganesan. "The paper was not running at a loss and there was no serious problem regarding newsprint." Ganesan claims that Natarajan's interference in all matters was the root cause of the paper's problems.

Jayalalitha has taken pains to dispel the feeling that Natarajan rules her roost. She said that Natarajan merely happens to be the husband of her "best



JAYALALITHA'S CAREER GRAPH



From films to politics

1963

- Makes her debut in Tamil cinema as the heroine in *Vennira Adai* (*White Dress*).

1964

- Acts in her first film with MGR, *Aayarathil Oruvan* (*One In A Thousand*).

1982

- Is launched in politics by MGR and soon becomes the AIADMK's propaganda secretary.

1983

- Is given a Rajya Sabha seat by MGR and is also made the deputy leader of the AIADMK Parliamentary Party

End-1984

- MGR falls ill and goes to America for treatment. Her

travails begin.

1985

- Is stripped of her post as the deputy leader of the AIADMK Parliamentary Party. MGR returns from the USA, has differences with Jayalalitha, but eventually restores her to her former position.

24 December, 1987

- MGR dies. Jayalalitha is

MGR's funeral



prevented from paying her last respects.

29 December, 1987

- Some senior AIADMK leaders and MLAs rally around her and compel her to lead a faction of the party, while former minister R.M. Veerappan heads rival faction.

3 January, 1988

- Governor S.L. Khurana



Janaki Ramachandran

invites Janaki Ramachandran, MGR's widow, to form government.

27 January, 1988

- Jayalalitha claims to be MGR's 'true' successor.



• (Clockwise from extreme left) Dishevelled after the Assembly attack: Jayalalitha blamed Karunanidhi; Jayalalitha: mysterious behaviour; on the balcony of her Poes Gardens residence: prisoner at her own house?; M. Natarajan: manipulating 'Madam'

friend", Sashikala. And Sashikala, according to Jayalalitha, is like her sister. Natarajan's influence, in fact, extends far beyond Jayalalitha's household. He was the key person responsible for managing the AIADMK during the January Assembly elections.

In the period immediately following MGR's death, Natarajan would attend high-level AIADMK meetings and would

intervene during discussions. Senior party leaders, such as V.R. Nedunchezhiyan and Panruti S. Ramachandran, objected to his presence. Ultimately, Jayalalitha had to ask him to stay away from the meetings.

Could it be Natarajan's shadow that has put Jayalalitha's political ambitions in eclipse? The suggestion seems

ludicrous. But then there is no rational explanation for Jayalalitha's desire to leave the political arena where she wanted to be queen and chief minister. After all, her partymen point out, even if she has been keeping poor health, she could remain in politics without exerting herself. The AIADMK needs Jayalalitha more as a figurehead—someone to lend charisma to the party during poll time.

Her exit is likely to break up the AIADMK and plunge Tamil Nadu politics into a state of confusion. According to one prognosis, most AIADMK members would, in that event, prefer to rejoin the DMK, which is the parent party. A smaller section might join the Congress(I), and a handful, the nascent Janata Dal. The National Front's plans for capturing the majority of Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu could come a cropper. For, Karunanidhi would not be averse to allying with the Congress(I). He is reported to have sent feelers to Rajiv Gandhi about an alliance and is said to be uncomfortable in the company of pro-Hindu Janata Dal politicians.

Whatever happens, Jayalalitha Jayaram seems destined to be the crucial factor in Tamil Nadu politics. And in this drama of the absurd that is being played out on the state's political stage, she remains the heroine. Cho Ramaswamy puts it best: "Ms Jayalalitha wants to be elected to the Assembly and even become the chief minister if possible. But then, she also claims privacy as regards her own voters. She will go underground and still the voters will have no right to ask why. 'You vote me to the Assembly and, after that, what I do is none of your business,' she says. Isn't that madness?"

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

28 January, 1988

- The Janaki government is dismissed

2 April, 1988

- Announces that a poll alliance with the Congress(I) is possible only if it agrees to continue the MGR formula by which the AIADMK contests two-thirds of the Assembly seats and the Congress(I), two-thirds of the Lok Sabha seats.

January 1989

- Is elected from the Bodinayakanur constituency in Madurai district in the Assembly election with a huge majority and becomes

the first woman leader of the Opposition.

15 March, 1989

- Writes a letter resigning from the Assembly, but does not send it to the Speaker.

18 March, 1989

- Policemen raid her aide Natarajan's residence. Speaker Tamizhkudimagan gets the resignation letter

Wooling voters



mysteriously and announces he is accepting it.

19 March, 1989

- Calls a press conference to deny she has quit politics and resigned from the Assembly.

22 March, 1989

- Speaker declares that Jayalalitha continues to be a legislator.

25 March, 1989

- Is assaulted inside the Assembly by DMK members, including some ministers.

4 April, 1989

- Alleges chief minister Karunanidhi had a hand in the Assembly violence and was conspiring to murder her and her close associates.

End-April 1989

- Issues instructions to her personal staff to send away visitors and tell party leaders that she is away at Bangalore for medical treatment.



M. Karunanidhi

4 July, 1989

- Calls six of her senior party leaders to announce she is quitting politics

6 July, 1989

- Addresses a press conference to deny that she is quitting politics.

Marks and the man

Did Rahul Gandhi get into St Stephen's because of his marksmanship?

The BJP doesn't think so

The Gandhi family has always had trouble with degrees. Mrs Gandhi left Sommerville, Oxford, after failing her Prelims. Sanjay Gandhi gave college a complete miss. And Rajiv Gandhi tells interviewers that he 'funkt' at Cambridge.

So, it was an occasion for much jubilation at Race Course Road when Rahul Gandhi secured admission to Delhi's prestigious St Stephen's College. After all, Rahul has had a particularly tough life over the last few years: securitymen insisted that he be withdrawn from Doon School (a boarding school in the little Uttar Pradesh town of Dehra Dun) and taught at home. Then they stopped him from going out to meet his friends for fear of terrorist attacks. Getting to read history in St Stephen's (where so many of daddy's friends, ex-friends and aides were educated: Ajitabh Bachchan, Arun Singh, Montek

Ahluwalia, Suman Dubey, Mani Shankar Aiyar, etc.) was, therefore, not just an educational milestone for the Gandhis, but an opportunity for him to lead the kind of life other children his age do.

Sadly, being the Prime Minister's son means that nothing is ever easy. Last week, the BJP's Madan Lal Khurana announced that his investigations had revealed that Rahul was not entitled to get into St Stephen's. Further, presumably because of the BJP's concern with educational standards at that august institution, the party would now launch a nationwide campaign on this subject of vital national importance.

Khanna's sleuthing had, apparently, yielded the following gems of information. One: Rahul got into Stephen's despite having secured 61 per cent in his school leaving exam. According to the BJP this proves that he doesn't deserve to get in. Two: Stephen's claims that he

has been admitted under the sports quota—he is a prize-winning marksman. Nonsense, retorts Khanna, Rahul's certificates are 'fake'.

All of this may sound a little silly: Surely it is not such a big deal if Rahul who has been denied a proper school education now gets into college with marks that are slightly below average? But Khanna is not laughing. And it can't be much fun for poor Rahul either.

The official PM's house and Congress(I) position is that Rahul has every right to be admitted to Stephen's. He is entitled to a sports quota place and by the standards of other sportsmen, 61 per cent is pretty good. (One student who got in under the quota got 55 per cent.)

As for the claims that his shooting skills are fake, PM's house rejects them completely. Apparently, Rahul has won two shooting gold medals at the state level and was ranked fourth at the national level. Already, the National Rifle Association and the Indian Olympic Association have issued statements attesting to Rahul's skills.

And, of course, there has been the predictable chorus from Congressmen. One MP, Jitendra Prasad, even went so far as to declare that he would organise a shooting competition at which Rahul's skills would be visible for all to see. Mohinder Singh Sathi, the mayor of Delhi, also issued his own statement making the curious point that if Rajiv could have rigged Rahul's admission, then he could also have rigged the results of the school-leaving exam to get Rahul a distinction. The fact that the junior Gandhi got just 61 per cent, proved that everything was on the level.

No doubt wiser counsel will prevail in the BJP and somebody will ask Khanna to button up on the grounds that his campaign will only earn the Gandhis some sympathy. But that may not help poor Rahul. The Intelligence Bureau has now told Rajiv that it can't guarantee his son's safety because St Stephen's is next to Khalsa College which is 'a hotbed of terrorists'.

So finally, the ghost of Bhindranwale could come to the BJP's aid. Some irony! **Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi**

The BJP's Madan Lal Khurana announced that his investigations had revealed that Rahul Gandhi was not entitled to get into St Stephen's. And that his party would launch a campaign on this subject of vital national importance

Madan Lal Khurana



Rahul Gandhi: shooting his way in

Death at daybreak

In a well-planned operation, terrorists gun down RSS activists at Moga in Punjab

Only the day before Punjab Governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray had boasted that the law and order situation in the state was improving. At a public meeting in Ludhiana, he claimed that the number of terrorist killings in the state had gone down considerably ever since the Barnala ministry fell.

But the events of 25 June showed how wrong he was. On that day, Moga witnessed a wave of killings which sent shock waves throughout the industrial town. At least 19 RSS activists were gunned down by terrorists while performing their morning exercises at Moga's Nehru Park. More lives were lost in two bomb blasts that followed later. The ghastly incidents took place exactly two weeks after the bomb explosion at New Delhi railway station that claimed more than a dozen lives. It was a grim reminder of the fact that the terrorists could strike at will, that they were definitely not on the run.

In a well-planned operation, three youths got off a Maruti van in front of Nehru Park at around 6.30 am. They entered the park through a narrow passage, walked a few yards past several morning-walkers, and stopped in front of a group of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) members. And, before anyone could realise their intentions, the three men opened fire from their AK-47 rifles.

Within seconds, the sleepy town woke up to what many thought were cracker blasts. The killers walked out of the park through its rear exit within a few minutes, leaving 12 people dead and about 50 others critically wounded. Seven of the injured later succumbed to their bullet injuries in hospital.

As the AK-47 wielding terrorists were about to board their waiting Maruti van, a small group of labourers raised an alarm. But their voices were promptly silenced by the killers who fired another round of bullets. Om Prakash (30), his wife, Shinder, and a ten-year old boy, Dimple, died on the spot. Among the injured was Om Prakash's two-year old daughter Sulochana, who is still in hospital.

The terrorists had also planted two powerful time bombs in the bushes and beneath the benches of the park. The first bomb exploded about an hour and a half after the shootout when the police and CRPF jawans were investigating the spot, after rushing off the injured to hospital. So powerful was the blast that it blew constable Jagtar Singh and home guard Kulwant Singh to pieces. While the DSP on duty had a miraculous escape two other cops were injured

feet deep and the deafening sound of the blasts could be heard all over the town. Senior police officers agree that the casualties would have been higher, had the two bombs exploded simultaneously.

Why were the police slow to react? The official explanation was that CRPF jawans in the vicinity of the park were taking a rest after a 72-hour long duty. Punjab Police chief K.P.S. Gill said that the jawans were busy providing security arrangements at two consecutive jagra-



The site where the killers parked their vehicle: gruesome murder

There was a pall of gloom in Moga after the shootout. What's more, the people were furious. They were so hostile that even Buta Singh was not allowed to enter the cremation ground

critically. According to eye-witnesses, blood stains and severed limbs were seen on the branches of trees several metres above the ground. Senior officers withdrew a shocked and demoralised police force soon after the bomb blast.

As feared by the police officers, a second blast took place about an hour later. Both the blasts left craters several

tas (night-long religious revelry) at a colony nearby. It was only a few hours before the massacre that the jawans had returned to their barracks for rest.

Nevertheless, the people of Moga were highly agitated over the fact that paramilitary personnel could do nothing while the terrorists committed the crime right under their noses. There was a pall of gloom over the town. But the people were furious too. Large crowds gathered in front of the city hospital and the cremation ground, chanting anti-police slogans. Some miscreants even threw brickbats at some shopkeepers in a busy marketplace for not downing their shutters to protest against the massacre. The administration added to the mobs' confusion by first clamping a curfew and then withdrawing it a short while later. The attitude of the people was so hostile that they did not let even the home minister, Buta Singh, enter the cremation ground.

Vipul Mudgal/Chandigarh

Terror in Telangana

The Telugu Desam rank and file blame the party's leadership for the killing of a panchayat president by the Naxalites

ANDHRA
PRADESH

Not all the flamboyance of N. T. Rama Rao (NTR), the Andhra Pradesh chief minister, can hide the fear in the hearts of his Telugu Desam partymen. Naxalites belonging to the People's War Group (PWG) of the CPI (ML), one of the few Naxalite outfits that still believes in the Maoist maxim that power flows from the barrel of a gun, has struck terror in districts of



The body of Malhar Rao: brutal killing

the Telangana region.

The PWG, which has been waging a war against the state and the rural rich for nearly a decade in the tribal-dominated districts of Adilabad and Karimnagar, created panic among Telugu Desam Party (TDP) workers in the two districts by kidnapping and killing Malhar Rao, the Mandal Panchayat president (MPP) of Tadicherla in Karimnagar. A note left in a trouser pocket of Rao warned that "this is only the beginning". It further stated: "We will continue to kill the elected representatives of Telugu Desam, unless the police release two of our comrades—G. Ilaiah and Rajamallu."

On an earlier occasion the PWG had abducted some IAS officers, but caused them no harm. This time, however, it carried out its threat, catching the TDP off-guard. The morale of the TDP workers in Karimnagar and Adilabad has sunk

to an all-time low. This was evident from the fact that top TDP leaders such as general-secretary Ashok Gajapathi Raju, NTR's sons-in-law Chandrababu Naidu and Venkateswar Rao TDP parliamentary party leader P. Upendra, and law minister C. Annanda Rao toured the two districts in the first week of this month in order to "infuse confidence among the people".

Few people even in the TDP, however, seem to believe that NTR's ultimatum to the Naxalites—ending on 13 July—to lay down arms or face the consequences, which he issued following Rao's murder on 10 June will bring results. While issuing the ultimatum NTR tried to placate the Maoists by declaring that there would be no police action against them during the period. But in the last week of June seven TDP MPPs resigned from their posts in Karimnagar district, fearing Naxalite attacks and doubting the government's ability to protect them. The PWG's terror tactics seemed to have paid off: about 40 MPPs from Karimnagar demanded judicial inquiry into the disappearance of Ilaiah and Rajamallu after they were arrested.

The state's director general of police (DGP), however, stoutly denies that the two men were ever arrested and claims that the police has announced an award of Rs 10,000 to anyone who furnishes information about their whereabouts. But, said Ramachandra Goud, one of the MPPs who resigned and had been kidnapped along with Malhar Rao: "The Naxalites want to know the whereabouts of their co-activists and since their demand is genuine, we are asking for an inquiry." Some district leaders of the party in Karimnagar and Adilabad have told NTR that "unless the government gives us protection we will have to leave the party".

The kidnapping and the ghastly murder of Rao, which was condemned by most political parties, including other Naxalite factions, however, focussed mass attention on police atrocities committed in the form of fake encounters and, on an ever-increasing number of persons missing after their arrest. Indeed, there has never before been such mounting pressure from within the ruling party to check police atrocities on the Naxalites. Even Upendra admitted after touring Karimnagar on 4 July: "I

agree with the allegation that the police in the district are resorting to fake encounters," and promised to bring the matter to the notice of the government. Significantly, the district's superintendent of police, S. V. Ramana Murthy, was suddenly transferred while Upendra was touring Karimnagar.

The statements of the TDP leaders seem to have had an adverse effect on



Telugu Desam leaders visiting a Karimnagar village: "Infusing confidence"

the police force. Senior police officials say "they will have a demoralising effect on the entire force whom none should blame in the event of a stepped-up Naxalite onslaught in the near future." Many policemen do not support NTR's policy of inviting the movement's leaders for talks and forming village defence squads to tackle the Naxalite problem. Asked one police officer: "How can the village defence squads with ordinary weapons do any good when well-trained policemen can do nothing when they are ambushed by the Naxalites with sophisticated AK-47 rifles, dynamites and grenades?"

What is significant is that the killing of Malhar Rao has driven a wedge between the TDP district leaders and those at the party headquarters at Hyderabad. The Karimnagar leaders say that the DGP's repeated denial that Ilaiah and Rajamallu

had been arrested and home minister Madhava Reddy's threat of launching combing operations precipitated the crisis and were the immediate causes of Rao's death. Said TDP MLA Spripada Rao: "The provocative statements of the home minister drove the Naxalites to murder Malhar Rao."

Meanwhile, NTR claimed credit for the surrender of 14 PWG activists in Medak district, saying that his gamble was beginning to pay off. But the BJP state general secretary said that those who surrendered were unimportant men who were quite powerless within the PWG. And, according to Vara Vara Rao, a Naxalite poet of repute, who was



released from jail only recently, the ultimatum and the surrenders were part of NTR's gimmick.

The two teams of TDP leaders that toured Karimnagar and Adilabad submitted their reports to the chief minister on 5 July and NTR held a high-powered meeting the following day. Though the reports mentioned the growing popular resentment against police atrocities, the government decided to bolster security arrangements in the region by setting up another 39 police stations—15 in Adilabad and 24 in Karimnagar. The measures to counter the Naxalites also include schemes like supplying *jowar* to Girijan tribals at Rs 1.25 per kilo. The government has also set up a three-member committee comprising a minister, the district collector and the district superintendent of police to supervise the anti-Naxalite measures and to look into complaints of police harassment.

Mukundan C. Menon / Hyderabad

Mahanta wins a round

The chief minister scores over his party dissidents by expelling three former ministers from the AGP

ASSAM

Chief minister Prafulla Mahanta has survived a virtual coup attempt by Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) dissidents. In fact, he has achieved a trifle more: he has crushed them for the time being, by expelling three former ministers from the party on 2 June.

The fillip to the dissidents' latest campaign against Mahanta was provided by a rice scandal, involving the state-owned cooperative, Statfed. Evidence so far unearthed suggests that Mahanta's personal link with it was at best tenuous (he was the minister in charge of cooperatives), but, ironically, while he had shaken off earlier, more direct allegations levelled against him by his detractors, he seemed less confident this time.

The deal was brought to light in the last Assembly session by the AGP's legislature party secretary, Kamala Kalita, and three former ministers, Nagen Sarma, Digen Bora and R.N. Kalita. After last year's floods, which destroyed much of the state's paddy crop, the food and civil supplies department directed Statfed to purchase 1.08 lakh tonnes of rice from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Statfed selected 58 firms for the job. One such firm, Imperial Trading Company, was commissioned to supply about 2,200 tonnes of rice.

Kamala Kalita alleged that Statfed had paid 85 per cent of a bill of Rs 80 lakhs to the firm on the basis of a railway receipt which was treated as a proof of the fact that the required quantity of rice had been delivered at Delhi station. But when the consignment reached Guwahati, it was found to be unfit for human consumption and, what is more, it was 4,000 quintals short in weight. To placate the agitated legislators the speaker announced the formation of a house committee to inquire into the deal. Significantly, it was headed by Nagen Sarma, a dissident who was dropped from Mahanta's cabinet last October, and comprised Digen Bora and Kamala Kalita, two other dissidents who were also former ministers, and three Opposition members.

On 6 June, the committee placed its interim report before the Assembly which found the deal "questionable": it observed that no tenders had been invited, that most of the 58 parties were selected on the basis of verbal orders from "high ups", and that the power of attorney was given to "dubious parties". The only reference to Mahanta came in the testimony of Niranjan Ghose, who was the managing director of Statfed when the deal was made. Ghose maintained that Mahanta had recommended some names to him, but this was hardly



Prafulla Mahanta: winning moves

an indictment of Mahanta, since none of the firms reportedly backed by him supplied substandard stuff.

But even so, sources close to Mahanta immediately launched a campaign against the house committee. A mysterious unsigned press statement first appeared, alleging that "the sweeping observations made and conclusions drawn were without reference to facts" and "intended only to embarrass the chief minister". As if to lend credence to the charges, one of the committee members, R.N. Kalita, resigned from the panel, expressing "shock" over the contents of the report which, he said, were incorrect.

Kalita's word might have carried weight had he not been reintroduced into the cabinet soon after he resigned from the committee. The saga of intrigue was given another bizarre twist when on 6 June, Niranjan Ghose wrote a letter to the chief secretary, A.B. Sarwan, stating that he had been receiving any-

mous phone calls, threatening him and the members of his family with dire consequences unless he personally implicated Mahanta in the rice deal. The hand-written letter on ordinary paper added that Digen Bora had demanded Rs 4 or 5 lakhs from Statfed chairman, Rupam Kakoti, to doctor the report so as to exonerate both Kakoti and Mahanta.

The affair became more intriguing when Rupam Kakoti, a former top brass of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), in a letter addressed to the two AGP general secretaries, Bhriгу Phukan, the home minister, and Atul Bora, the PWD minister, alleged that the chief secretary may have acted under instructions from the chief minister himself. He also alleged that it was Mahanta who had asked him to take Rs 25 lakhs—for the party fund—from a businessman and grant him a contract for rice rakes in return. Kakoti named two office-bearers of the AGP, Habibur Rehman and Khanin Mahanta as witnesses to the conversation.

Kakoti's letter seemed to be the proverbial nail in the AGP's coffin. It was against this backdrop that Bhriгу Phukan—and not Mahanta, the party president—convened a meeting of the AGP executive on 2 July. Phukan, who is reported to have been meeting the dissidents for quite some time, has always maintained a low profile. In spite of his rumoured differences with the chief minister, Phukan never came out openly against him.

But belying rumours that the meeting would spell the end of Mahanta's leadership, it reaffirmed his supremacy. Three former ministers—of whom Chandramohan Patowary and Atul Koch were suspended early this year—and Holiram Terang, were expelled from the party. Patowary was axed, for allegedly hobnobbing with the Congress(I), Koch for allegedly forging his degree certificates, and Terang for campaigning against the AGP in the recent elections to the Karbi Anglong district council, from where he hails.

How did Mahanta tide over one of the worst crises in his political career? Though not a reputed strategist in the mould of Hiteswar Saikia or S.C. Jamir of Nagaland, Mahanta seemed to have played his cards astutely: first, by re-inducting R.N. Kalita and Bharat Narah into his cabinet a few days before the meeting. Narah, a leading dissident, has now become Mahanta's most vocal spokesman. This step seems to have taken the wind out of the dissidents' sails.

Radhika Ramaseshan/Guwahati

Insulted and humiliated

Harijans oppressed by a Union minister's relatives decide to leave their village

GUJARAT

The exodus began on 26 June. Three hundred and fifty Harijan men, women and children from Union minister of state for finance B.K. Gadhvi's village, Sambarda, in Gujarat, decided to abandon their homes and migrate to Palanpur, six kilometres away. This was because they could take it no more: the Gadhvis had crossed all limits in ill-treating and humiliating the Harijans.

The minister's relatives—including



The Harijans of Sambarda at Palanpur: awaiting justice

his cousin, nephew and brothers—had been terrorising the Harijans by molesting their women, beating up the youths and disrupting their social and religious functions. Said P.H. Parmar, a college

Missing the mark

Computer snags hold up the results of 11,000 students appearing in the Secondary Examinations in West Bengal

While Chhatra Parishad troopers (the student wing of the Congress-I) hurled themselves against the steel gates of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in Calcutta, demanding the resignation of state primary and secondary education minister Kanti Biswas, anxious students and their parents and teachers stood by, hoping that the Madhyamik (Class X public examinations) results would finally be declared. The results of about 11,000 students have been withheld by the board and the delay might jeopardize their careers. Other students have complained that their marksheets were either incomplete or incorrectly tabulated.

The board's secretary, Prof. Sudhin Chatterjee, blamed, "breakdowns in the newly-acquired computer system for the delay in publishing all the results." After accusing the schools and students of not filling out all the forms correctly, Chatterjee promised to "solve all problems

in a week."

Defending his computer-illiterate minions in the board, who apparently allowed the computers to malfunction on three successive days just before the results were to be announced, Prof. Chatterjee said that this was the first time that the Board of Secondary Education officials were using computers and a few mistakes were "understandable".

But the possibility of another breakdown next year cannot be ruled out. Nor is the board keen to learn

Defending his computer-illiterate minions, the secretary of the Board of Secondary Education said that a few mistakes were understandable since the officials were using computers for the first time



professor hailing from the village Sambarda: "Almost everyday at least one Harijan youth was beaten up by the men of the Gadhvi community. Our boys are not allowed to tuck their shirts in their trousers, wear sunglasses or ride bikes. We are fed up and so we decided to

from its mistakes. There are still no plans to impart comprehensive computer training to all its personnel.

But Chatterjee's troubleshooting will not solve the students' basic problem: of getting admitted to a school for the two-year higher secondary course. Evaluators, following the board's new guidelines have marked less stringently: about 70 per cent of the 4.30 lakh examinees were successful compared to 50 per cent last year. Over 27,000 students secured first class marks and another 84,000 second class. But many students who have secured first class marks are unlikely to get admission to the city's more prestigious schools. And many students who have passed in the second division are unlikely to get admission to any school in the state.

While most students are scrambling for seats in the state's most prestigious schools, others are still waiting outside the barred gates of the board's office. Afraid that they would be edged out in this crucial rat-race because of the delay, the students are hoping that the board officials and their faulty computers will come to their rescue.

Srinjoy Chowdhury / Calcutta

move before the Gadhvis started killing us."

The Gadhvis of Sambarda are all rich landlords and farmers and happen to be the only other community living in the village other than the Harijans. They were bards in ancient times, but turned farmers after receiving land as gift from kings whose praises they used to sing. Today, they move about with licensed or illegal arms. They force Harijans to walk with their heads down, prevent them from going to temples or being photographed, the guests of the Harijans are taunted and jeered at, and Gadhvi children pollute the water Harijan women carry in pots from the village well.

Almost every bit of land in the village is owned by the Gadhvis, who have turned a government-sponsored training centre into a private guest house. Even a crematorium, where the Harijans burn their dead, has been taken over by them. Said Gopal Solanki, the BJP mayor of Ahmedabad who had come to meet the affected families at Palanpur: "The Harijans have no place to ease themselves, no place to meet or sit together, and their children can't go to school because the Gadhvis work as teachers."

The incident that forced the Harijans to flee Sambarda occurred on 11 June. A Harijan youth, Rajnikant Manabhai, was very nearly beaten to death simply because the Gadhvis did not like the way he dressed. On 18 June, the Harijans held a meeting in which they decided to migrate. And, on 26 June, they packed their meagre belongings and set off for Palanpur, leaving behind their cattle and immovable property.

Though the district superintendent of police has offered the Harijans police protection, they are reluctant to return to Sambarda and have demanded land near Palanpur instead. "How long will the police protect us?" asked Parmar who has written to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, home minister Buta Singh and other leaders, seeking justice.

While chief minister Amarsinh Chaudhary assured a delegation of Harijan MPs and MLAs that the matter will be inquired into, B.K. Gadhvi plays down the issue by saying that the villagers are making a mountain out of a molehill. Meanwhile, the BJP held a day-long demonstration in Ahmedabad on 3 July, and various organisations of the backward communities have convened a rally at Palanpur on 10 June. It appears that the matter could well swell into a major conflict if the government failed to punish the guilty and rehabilitate the affected families.

Mahesh Trivedi / Ahmedabad

Parting ways

Nandini Satpathy's son embarrasses her by participating in an Opposition rally

ORISSA

J.B. Patnaik's camp in the state Congress(I) appears to have scored over the dissidents with former chief minister Nandini Satpathy's son, Tathagata, joining the Opposition bandwagon and thus virtually ruining her chances of becoming the state's next chief minister.

As the patriarch of a clan of Congress(I) loyalists, J.B. Patnaik's credentials can hardly be bettered. His wife, Jayanti Patnaik, MP, who is the president of the All India Mahila Congress(I), organised



Political observers have been noting the differing views of Satpathy and her son, Tathagata, ever since she returned to the ruling party

the biggest-ever rally of the party's women's wing in Bhubaneswar in May this year, giving a good account of her organisational abilities. Patnaik's son-in-law's elder brother, Niranjan Patnaik, is in the ruling party and is the *de facto* number two in the cabinet. J.B. Patnaik's son-in-law, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, who is the owner-editor of two local dailies is close to the Congress(I), which he may formally join any time he chooses in order to fulfil his known "political ambitions". Soumya Ranjan's younger brother, Amiya Ranjan, is also ex-

pected to join the ruling party in the near future.

Nandini Satpathy is, therefore, at a great disadvantage in not having been able to induct her entire family into the Congress(I), to which she returned last year, after a lapse of 12 years. Her husband, Debendra Satpathy, who was once a Congress MP, is no longer politically active, and, now, Tathagata has chosen to join the Janata Dal to achieve his political ends.

The J.B. Patnaik camp mounted an anti-Satpathy campaign after Tathagata took part in Opposition-sponsored demonstrations in front of the Cuttack AIR (All India Radio) and Doordarshan stations on 26 June. But Tathagata's alignment with the Janata Dal was not a sudden development nor was it a strategy prepared by the mother and the son to pressurise the Congress(I) high command into offering Nandini Satpathy an influential post within the party as is being made out by the present chief minister's followers.

Political observers have been noting the differing views of Satpathy and her son, ever since the former returned to the ruling party. Tathagata went on record at that time, saying that he did not share his mother's political views. "If I ever join politics, my place will be in the Opposition, more precisely in the Janata," he had declared.

Patnaik's supporters have been trying to influence the party high command against Satpathy by regularly sending copies of pro-Opposition editorials and articles appearing in the Oriya daily, *Dharmi*, which is owned and edited by Tathagata, to their party bosses in Delhi. But it is only now that Satpathy and her dissident supporters have been clearly embarrassed by Tathagata's formal appearance on the Janata Dal stage in the wake of the dissidents' trip to Delhi to renew their demand for Patnaik's removal. Eleven MLAs had camped in the capital in the third week of June and met several AICC(I) members, seeking permission to resign from the legislature to record their disenchantment with Patnaik's leadership. Though Satpathy herself was not in the delegation, her support for the dissidents was a well-known fact.

Dissident leader Basant Biswal said that the rebels could do nothing about Tathagata's action, and added that he was "competent enough to take his own decisions". Yes, indeed; but they could also cost Satpathy and the dissidents their political future.

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

A deluge of drugs

The Burmese narco-mafia makes inroads into the north-eastern states of India

NARCOTICS

It was Sunday and a Sabbath day in Mizoram. The streets of Champai, a sub-divisional town on the state's eastern border with Burma, were deserted, as the Mizos prefer to stay indoors on the Sabbath. But late in the evening, a white Maruti taxi was seen darting in and out of the town at breakneck speed. This unusual movement made the town's customs guards suspicious. The car was intercepted, searched and 695 gm of heroin was unearthed. This seizure, made on 12 February this year, has been the biggest haul of this contraband in Mizoram so far.

On 21 February, customs officials ran into a Burmese army officer at Moreh,



the infamous rendezvous of smugglers near Manipur's eastern border with Burma and recovered 850 gm of heroin from him. A few days later, a Nainital-based trader was caught red-handed while receiving a consignment of 950 gm of heroin from a Burmese national.

Some time later, customs personnel nabbed an intelligence officer of the Indian army's 8 Mountain Division, Major Balbir Singh Sangha, for having allegedly transported 2.35 kg of heroin to Dimapur, a bustling commercial centre in Nagaland, in his jeep. And, towards the end of May, an Assam police officer was held at the Guwahati railway

Dangerous take-off

The government of Rajasthan allows its chief pilot to fly without a valid licence

Can a pilot without a valid licence be allowed to fly an aeroplane? Yes, if he happens to be employed by the government of Rajasthan and the plane belongs to the state. However unbelievable it may sound, the fact is that the state's chief pilot (incidentally, he is also the only pilot employed by the state) did not have a valid flying licence, and, yet, was allowed to make frequent trips with VIPs on board.

Despite the government being financially handicapped (the state suffered a few consecutive draughts) and the Centre's advice to defer the purchase of a new plane, the state government placed an order for a King Air C90-A aircraft, costing Rs three crores. The government also sent its chief pilot, R.K. Khanna, to the USA to be trained in flying the plane, though the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya



The King Air C-90A aircraft: not for novices

Udan Akademi (IGRUA) had every facility for training pilots in flying King Air planes.

After Khanna returned from the USA with the newly-acquired plane, he was sent to the IGRUA to have his licence endorsed so that he could fly the new aircraft. But the academy turned down Khanna's application.



(Above) A BSF outpost at Moreh; (right) a seized heroine packet: deadly traffic

station with 750 gm of heroin in his possession. The Indian north-east was being suddenly propelled into prominence in the narcotic trade.

During the last seven months, 9.67 kg of heroin, worth Rs nine crores in the international market, was seized by customs and excise staff at 10 different places, and 26 people, including six Burmese nationals, were arrested.

There are enough indications to suggest that the drug mafia who rule the roost in the Golden Triangle, a loosely-

administered desolate area where Burma, Thailand and Laos share a border, have shifted a part of their operations to north-west Burma and the Indian north-east. Their aim is to develop the wooded terrain of these parts as part of a new heroin trail, as the traditional routes along south-west Thailand have become much too hot after Bangkok cracked down on drug-runners in an anti-narcotic drive funded by the USA and Australia.

The DRI (Directorate of Revenue Intelligence) and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) officials in the north-east are worried over another development in Burma. The country is expecting a

bumper opium harvest this year. The yield will be about 2,200 tonnes, almost double the 1988 crop. The boom in the production is attributed to the stoppage of US aid to Burma for spraying aerial defoliants on the opium fields, following a military coup in that country in September. Enthused by this, Burma's drug king, Khun Sa (real name Chang

Chu Fu), who runs an extortion and protection racket in Shan state in east Burma, has decided to finance the heroin refineries in the country's north-west regions. Khun Sa, 56, who leads a 2,100-member gang of narco-terrorists called Shan United Army (SUA), was recently spotted at Tamu, a Burmese town opposite Moreh.

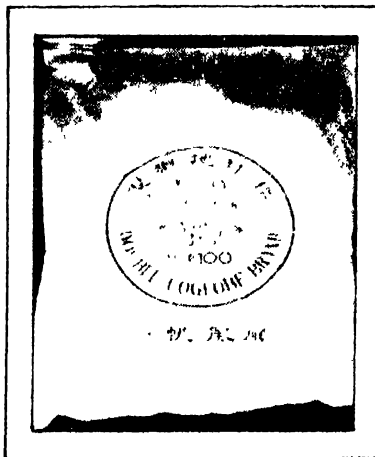
The bulk of the heroin in the north-east is smuggled in through Moreh, Behang and New Soudal in Manipur, Nampong, via Pauggan pass, in Arunachal Pradesh, and Champai in Mizoram. Champai is an ideal entry point as it is near Kalemmyo where a number of heroin refineries are located. Moreh gets its supplies from the Burmese border towns of Layshi and Homalin, which have refineries that are protected by the Chin mafia groups, owing allegiance to Brang Seng, leader of the insurgent Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). The other heroin manufacturing towns in Burma are Mythikyna, Bhamo, Lashio, Mamiyo, Mandalaya and Taunggui.

The drug runners move about with impunity along the porous, and almost unpoliced 1800-km-long Indo-Burmese border. The Shillong collectorate of the

customs and the central excise has only five inadequately staffed field units along the border. Though the BSF has a post at Moreh in Manipur it is not very effective. It is alleged that the BSF has employed a number of interpreters, who moonlight as brokers for the jawans. They take a "cut" from those entering Moreh from across the border with headloads of goods for trading. They are made to hand over 80 per cent of their daily earning to the BSF, and it is believed that heroin is concealed in many a headload.

Another problem faced by the authorities is the cultivation of poppy plants on the mountains in the border regions.

Since 1985, the Kuki bandits from Burma have been forcing the border people to raise this crop and send the harvest to the Burmese refineries. The farmers are paid well. The customs department destroyed 22,78,000 poppy plants early this year in six separate operations. The largest number of plants (about 15 lakhs) were burnt in Chandel district, in Man-



ipur.

Manipur appears to be the worst affected state. Heroin addiction accounts for 23 out of every 1,000 psychiatric cases in the state as against the national average of six out of every 1,000. The one-gram heroin packs, variously known as 'Lion', 'Number 4' and 'Cobra', are easily available in downtown Imphal and Churachandpur.

The Centre has only recently woken up to the threat heroin is posing to the entire north-east. Said B.V. Kumar, chief of the directorate of revenue intelligence, the bulk of the 20-million dollar aid from the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control which India has received would be spent in the north-east. A worried Ajit Panja, Union minister of state for revenue, disclosed during a recent visit to Imphal, the Manipur capital, that he had taken up the matter with the Burmese authorities and alerted the chief ministers of the seven north-eastern states.

Money will be no problem in tackling the menace, Panja has assured the north-eastern states; what might be lacking is the will.

Santanu Ghosh/Imphal, Churachandpur and Aizwal

- 4 The IGRUA director, M.K. Dawar, wrote to the state government on 10 April this year, saying that Khanna's performance on the simulator and on actual flights between Delhi and Lucknow was far from being satisfactory. Dawar suggested that Khanna undergo a six-week training course, without which, he said, "it would not be possible for him (Khanna) to come anywhere near the proficiency needed to fly the King Air C-90A aircraft".

The matter was further complicated by the fact that Khanna's 'open airlines transport pilot licence'—which is a basic minimum a pilot must possess—had also expired. This licence authorises a pilot to fly an aircraft weighing upto 5,700 kg. Moreover, his instrument rating certificate, which certifies a pilot's night-flying capability, had also become time-barred. Khanna was thus left without any flying licence, but was allowed to remain on the job and actually fly.

Milap Chand Dandia/Jaipur

Comrades at war

Clashes between CPI and CPI(M) cadres threaten left unity in the state

KERALA

Is the leftist brotherhood breaking up in Kerala? An uneasy calm that prevailed in the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) for sometime past was finally shattered early this month when CPI and CPI(M) supporters clashed in different parts of the state over the murder of a CPI worker, Kunjachan, at Thiravalla by activists of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) — a frontal organisation of the CPI(M).

Said Kannam Rajendran, a CPI MLA: "It was a cold-blooded murder with the connivance of the police. About 75 DYFI men marched to Kunjachan's house, shouting slogans that they would kill him and, in spite of having received prior information and complaints from his wife, the police did not act." Rajendran added that tension was building up in the relations between the supporters of the two parties because of the CPI(M)'s attempts to counter the CPI's

growing influence in the region.

The Congress(I)-led United Democratic Front (UDF) Opposition, walked out of the Assembly in protest against the government's refusal to allow a discussion on the issue. To make amends, the government transferred a few police officers from Thiruvalla and the CPI(M) strongman, state party secretary V.S. Achutanandan, issued a stern warning to his men by saying that "those who could not imbibe the spirit of the LDF would be thrown out of the party". Nevertheless, clashes broke out in various other places between the supporters of the two parties. Confessed Rajendran: "The CPI has been at the receiving end of violent attacks by the CPI(M) men. Since the LDF came to power, there have been more than 130 attacks on our offices and men, and four

of our supporters have died in the process."

Meanwhile, in a significant move the CPI(M) general secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad has invited the Kerala Congress to work in concert with the LDF in Kerala. Two years back, Namboodiripad had described the Kerala Congress as a party of Christian fundamentalists and a communal untouchable as far as the CPI(M) was concerned. Namboodiripad, however, laid down two conditions for joining hands with the Kerala Congress. The CPI(M) supremo said it should fight for the legitimate rights of Kerala by delinking itself from the Congress(I), and that it should cease to be an appendage of the Church in the state. Namboodiripad is wooing the Mani and the Joseph factions of the Kerala Congress on the eve of the parliamentary elections to create confusion among the constituents of the UDF.



E.M.S. Namboodiripad

The Kerala Congress (Joseph), a constituent of the UDF, has been involved in a running battle with the Congress(I) and its arch-enemy, the Kerala Congress (Mani). The Congress(I) feels that they lost the last Assembly elections mainly because of the infighting between these two factions of the Kerala Congress. The Congress(I) leadership has decided to cut the Kerala Congress

(Joseph) to size in the coming parliamentary polls by giving them only one seat when they were allowed to contest two in the last elections.

K.M. Mani who leads one faction of the Kerala Congress and is close to Congress(I), lashed out at Namboodiripad and ruled out any alliance with the CPI(M) "especially now that its image is eroding". Said Mani: "We will stick to the Congress(I) and would not like to associate ourselves with the communists who are refusing to keep pace with the changing tenor of the world communist movement." But Mani's arch rival, P.J. Joseph, leader of the other Kerala Congress faction, has not issued any statement in support of Congress(I), making it clear that he is keeping his options open.

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

Broken promise

Devi Lal reneges on his word to waive loans taken by farmers from banks

HARYANA

Has the only surviving Janata Dal government in the country—the Janata Dal-BJP coalition in Haryana—failed to keep its most important promise to the people? During his election campaign in 1987, Devi Lal promised the people that he would write off all their loans, if they voted him to power. But after being elected, all that the Janata Dal-BJP alliance did was to announce that all those who had regularly paid their instalments for loans taken from cooperative and land development banks upto 23 March, 1987—the day Devi Lal made the promise at Jind—would not have to repay the rest of their instalments. This meant a defaulter couldn't benefit from Devi Lal's election promise.

"But marginal landholders and Harijans are always defaulters," says Raghu Yadav, an MLA from the state who was expelled from the Janata Dal for having raised the issue, among other things. "I toured about 250 villages in Haryana," he says, "but didn't find even 250 farmers who could proudly say that the government had waived their loans." Instead, they find themselves in a tight spot: most of them told Yadav that they had stopped repaying their loans, hoping that they would be waived. As a result, the instalments piled up over the last three years and, with an interest of 12-16 per cent, their loan burden has doubled.

Devi Lal, however, denies that he has gone back on his word. Speaking at a meet-the-press session on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Dal-BJP coalition, he claimed that the greatest achievement of his government was that it has been able to write off debts in spite of the Centre's resistance. The total amount written off till 20 June, 1989 was about Rs 248 crores, he claimed. He said that his government had also constituted a Debt Reconciliation Board to provide protection to people who took loans from commercial banks.

Nirmal Mitra/Chandigarh

Fighting fundamentalism

Can Farooq Abdullah keep the Hizb-i-Islami in check?

The Farooq Abdullah government appears to be unable to curtail the activities of the Hizb-i-Islami, a pro-Pak fundamentalist outfit, in the Kashmir Valley. The Hizb-i-Islami is not a very powerful organisation. It is a small group of Kashmiri youths who seem hell-bent on destroying Sheikh Abdullah's legacy. The Lion of Kashmir was all for the advancement of women in his state: he was the pioneer of modernism and women's education in the Valley. The Hizb-i-Islami apparently wants to undo all this.

These fundamentalists have warned Muslim women in the Valley that they should put on *purdah* (veil) or face dire consequences. They have even gone to the extent of giving a call to Muslim women that they should not indulge in any kind of entertainment—whether it is watching television or visiting cinema halls. According to reports from the Valley, the Hizb-i-Islami has instructed women to wear shirts with full sleeves and cover their necks. They have warned tailors that they should not stitch any female attire which, in their eyes, do not conform to Islamic tenets.

Unfortunately, the chief minister has cut a very sorry figure. Although he is a well-meaning person with a modern outlook, his ministry has proved to be a non-starter. He seems to have forgotten the legacy of his father, Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Sahib fought tooth and nail against the *mullahs* for the education of women in the Valley. He had asked Muslim women to do away with *purdah*. His wife worked tirelessly among the women to abolish *purdah* and it was only because of their efforts that the Muslims of Kashmir became such a modernised and cohesive community.

Even today, the influence of Sheikh Abdullah is so great that Muslim women in the villages do not wear *purdah*. This tradition has spread even to urban areas because of the education and liberal leadership of Abdullah. Sheikh Abdullah opened schools for girls and wanted that each and every Muslim girl be allowed to attend college. He was a religious leader with a modern outlook. Little wonder then that, as far as education is concerned, Muslim girls in the Valley are way ahead of their counterparts in other states. Moreover, they have also been taking an active part in politics and other fields. One could feel delighted to see their modern approach to life.

But this modernism has in no way affected their religious beliefs. Muslim women in Kashmir are probably the most ardent followers of Islam and its precepts. But the apparent incompetency of the Farooq Abdullah regime on every

front has only served to allow organisations like the Hizb-i-Islami to thrive. The threats from the Hizb-i-Islami are taken very seriously—even female announcers and newsreaders of Srinagar Doordarshan appear on TV these days with their heads covered.

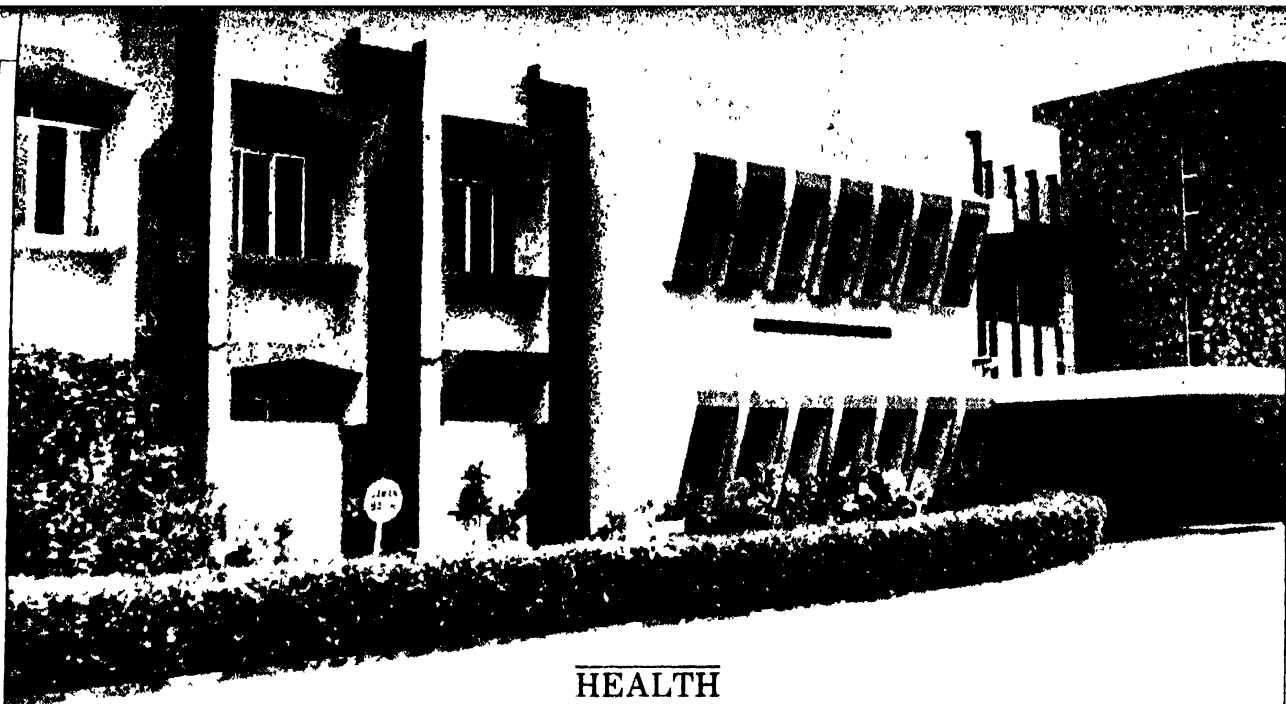
Women have always been the primary target of any religious fundamentalist group. That is why the Hizb-i-Islami has not spared even Hindu



Farooq Abdullah is a well-intentioned man. Only he can save the Valley from the clutches of fundamentalists. But mere good intentions are not enough

women. They have been asked to put *tika* on their foreheads. I am not writing against the Hizb-i-Islami because it is a powerful organisation. My contention is that such organisations should be banned from the very beginning. Nowhere has the Quran looked down upon the role of women in society. But such organisations try to create terror in the name of Islam.

There are no doubts that Farooq Abdullah is a well-intentioned man. I agree that only he can save the Valley from the clutches of fundamentalists. He is a dynamic leader and can feel the pulse of the masses. But mere good intentions are not enough, and he should have learned this from his father, Sheikh Abdullah. Farooq's intentions are clear but he is not a man of action. And this lethargic attitude is responsible for the prevailing state of affairs in the Kashmir Valley. The most interesting part is that Dr Abdullah heads the hit-list of these fundamentalist forces. If he wants to survive in the Kashmir Valley, he will have to shrug off his political lethargy. ■



HEALTH

In nature's hands

Celebrities and ordinary people alike avail of Jindal Institute's drugless cures

The Jindal Institute: only one of its kind in Asia

Where do Buta Singh, Ramakrishna Hegde, Dilip Kumar, Saira Banu, Jayalalitha, P. Venkatasubbaiah, and the (Raj) Kapoors go to getaway from it all? To the Institute of Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences (INYS), better known as Jindal Institute, located on 55 acres of lush farmland, a bare ten kilometres from Bangalore city. The patients' list of the centre reads like a national who's who, with celebrities making their way here to take a well-deserved break secure in the knowledge that their privacy will be protected. (When speculation ran riot about AIADMK leader Jayalalitha's whereabouts, for instance, the institute, where the lady was being treated, chose to maintain a discreet silence.)

The authorities are quick to clarify, however, that VIP occupancy is not the

institute's sole claim to fame. This is not just a place where the rich idle. Instead, they say, it is the only institute of its kind in Asia. So, what makes INYS, founded in 1979 by industrialist Sitaram Jindal, so special?

First is the fact that the only treatment the centre offers is naturopathy—no drugs, either allopathic or homoeopathic, are allowed. The professed aim of INYS, going by its brochure is "to promote drugless therapy, by using

concepts of nature cure and yoga which have their origins in India". And the institute is specific about what it treats—migraine, sinusitis, bronchial asthma, ulcers and other stomach disorders, hepatitis, menstrual disorders, hypertension, diabetes mellitus, insomnia, anxiety neurosis, spondylitis and arthritis. This with the help of a team of naturopaths, led by Dr Sambasiva Rao, and an advanced physiotherapy section.

The hospital refuses to help those

who will not benefit from the INYS therapy. So, patients with cardiac diseases, those needing surgery, and those above 65 years and below 12 years of age are out. (To deal with such cases, the Jindal Trust is building an allopathic hospital alongside.) The Jindal brochure maintains that those with obesity problems will be given extremely low prior-

The 'nest' at INYS: most expensive accommodation



The patients' list of the centre reads like a national who's who, with celebrities making their way here to take a well-deserved break

ity. "This is not a slimming centre," it observes severely.

Such protestations notwithstanding, there's no denying that much of the rush is due to the current 'slim is in' fad. And people vie for admission even though the Jindal regimen—hip bath at 5.45 am, followed by a brisk walk, yogic *kriyas*, *pranayama* (breathing exercises) mud pack treatment, work out at the gymnasium, diet of juices, sauna and steam bath and bed at 10.30 pm—is tough on those used to the soft life.

It does lead to impressive weight losses, though, as testified to by patients in a booklet titled *A Few Case Histories*. Says Dr Babu Paul, chairman of the Cochin Port Trust, who spent 10 days at INYS in 1985: "I lost five kgs and left smoking." Popular background singer of south Indian films S.P. Balasubramaniam writes: "I lost seven kgs in ten days without any physical or mental strain whatsoever." The booklet has records of those cured of asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, piles, chronic spondylitis and sciatic pain.

Among the testimonials is one by Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner, L.V. Prasad in the institute's publication *Health Herald*: "I have visited some institutions in USA but I felt INYS is a better place...I can say that it is the only one of its kind in Asia." Little wonder then, that the centre does not advertise its facilities. As its information booklet says: "Our patients are the best public relations."

Every kind of patient finds a place here. There are 'nests' for the VIPs, which comprise "two bedrooms, two dressing rooms, a big lawn, bathrooms, television and a telephone" according to Kamala Lekhwani, the institute's welfare officer. A nest can accommodate four people but the charge—Rs 300 per day—is for a minimum of two persons only. The 'hut' which is half the size of the 'nest', television and all, comes at Rs 250 per day. The 'cottage' costs only Rs 200 per patient per day, while the lower class single and double rooms go for Rs 60 and Rs 80 respectively. Since the minimum stay advised at Jindals is 20 days, high-priced accommodation can amount to quite a bit.

Not that the expense keeps people away. At any given time the hospital is fully booked, and people have to apply for rooms three months in advance to be in with a chance. A tour through the hospital explains why. Much of the equipment is highly sophisticated and in most cases, imported. Says a physiotherapist at the hospital, proudly



The Jindal's brochure maintains that those with obesity problems will be given extremely low priority. "This is not a slimming centre," it observes severely

A patient being treated by naturopathy: large clientele

pointing to a computerised traction machine to treat spinal disorders and backaches: "We are getting better equipment soon. This is going to be the best equipped nature cure hospital."

But the institute has a place for the poor too. Says Kamala Lekhwani: "A lot of VIPs come here, yes. But for us it makes very little difference whether the patient is a VIP or a poor man." For the latter there are the free wards, one for male patients and the other for females, each with 20 beds, where treatment is given free of cost.

The authorities further clarify that "charges are for accommodation only, while all treatment and diet is free".

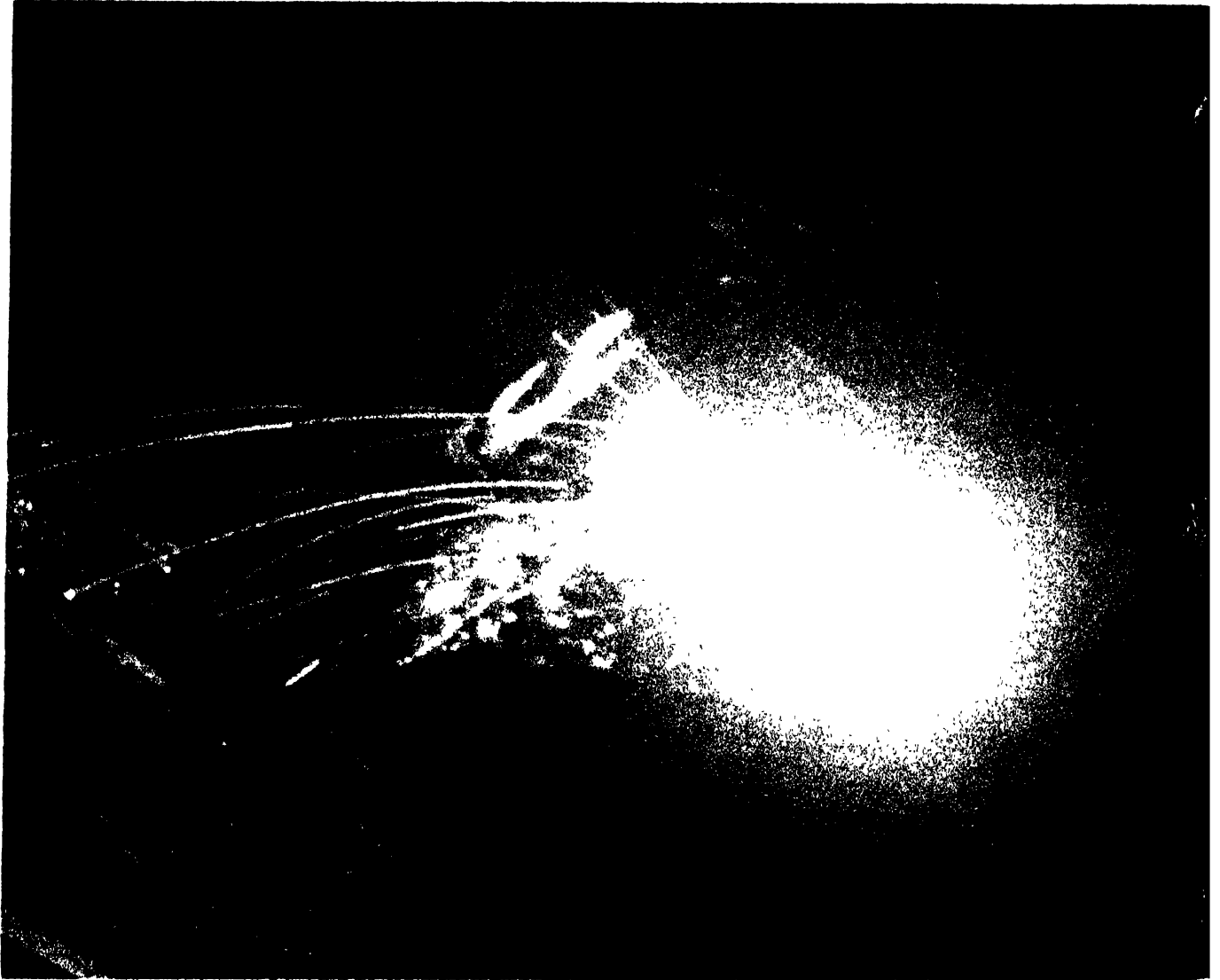
Discipline is strict. All visitors to the hospital are put through a strict security check, to ensure that no 'objectionable' stuff is carried in. Patients are expected to 'surrender' all medicines on admission.

Those who don't follow the austerity measures are, rather unceremoniously, shown the door. And it is made clear to those who stay on that the dietary restrictions have to be followed even after their stint at Jindals is over. The brochure reads: "Those who after staying here have given up alcohol, smoking, drugs, *zarda* and *pan masala* only to resume them at home are requested kindly not to apply for admission as the institute cannot help them."

Undeterred by such testiness, the patients keep coming year after year. Business is booming but the institute has no plans of starting a similar hospital elsewhere. They would rather make the Bangalore centre perfect.

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

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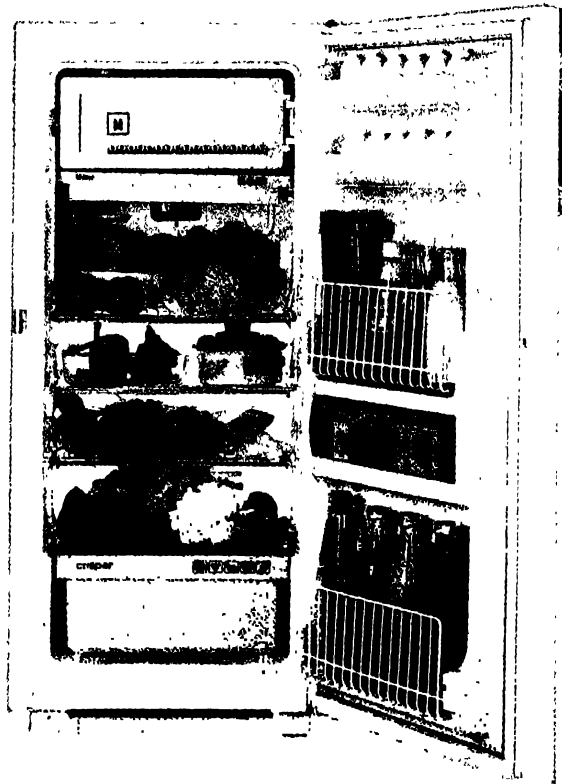
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Cricket Life: disappointing

Imran Khan is easily the most versatile all-rounder in the world today. In more senses than one.

Currently, Khan is working on a book on the Indus Valley Civilisation; raising funds for a cancer research centre in memory of his mother; has been appointed an ambassador of goodwill by the UNO; writes a column exclusively for *Daily Telegraph*; is editing a cricket monthly published by South Publications (UK) Ltd—*Cricket Life International*.

Perhaps, the most interesting feature of the magazine is its tombstone. The editorial board is truly international: among those represented on it are 'Dickie' Bird, Abdul Rehman Bukhatir, Ian Chappell, Chris Cowdrey, Sunil Gavaskar, Michael Holding, Michael Manley (Prime Minister of Jamaica, no less!), Sidath Wettimuny and John Wright. The magazine barons have roped in players from all cricketing countries. But does this board meets once a month to finalise editorial content, flying down from Colombo, Kingston, Auckland, Bombay, Sharjah and Yorkshire?

Not really. In view of logistical (read financial) constraints the editorial board rarely meets. So, there is a back-up desk staff as well, on which Bernard Halloran figures as editor and Mushtaq Zaman as editorial assistant. Both of them are non-celebrities.

There are a large bunch of correspondents too. But here again only a few are capable of turning a phrase to best advantage. Australian cricket writer Mike Coward, Pakistan's Omar Qureishi, and England's Paul Fitzpatrick and Mike Selvey are probably the only ones who possess genuine writing skill.

Man of many talents

Imran Khan is now into editing a cricket monthly

It is always misleading to judge a publication by its first issue. Most magazines hit the stands with a bang, only to peter out into banalities in subsequent issues. But *Cricket Life* is an exception. It has resorted to cliches from the word go. We have Imran Khan writing on neutral umpiring (not again!); an article on India's nightmarish West Indies tour in the July issue; Sunil Gavaskar telling Bridgette Lawrence (one would have expected him to write the article considering he is on the editorial board) why India failed in the West Indies and what he thinks is an appropriate formula for revival, all in less than 400 words; a profile of Gloucestershire bowler David

Imran Khan: versatile



Lawrence (who's he? asks a Calcutta reader); 15 pages of some really sub-standard pictures of previous Ashes series; profiles of Ian Bishop, Brian Lara (he's yet to play a Test) and Mushtaq Ahmed (the author feels he is going to become another Abdul Qadir); and a report on how cricket coverage in the United Kingdom is about to be caught up in the satellite revolution.

Most magazines hit the stands with a bang, only to peter out into banalities in subsequent issues. But Cricket Life is a disappointment from word go

On the credit side, there is a review of a book by Sir Neville Cardus (a full page-and-a-half) and an article revealing that different statistical methods give rise to widely differing results. (Vengsarkar who figures at number two on the list of top batsmen according to the Deloitte Ratings method, is placed first by the magazine's own statistical experts, using different standards.) Gloucestershire cricketer Phil Bainbridge explains how best to organise one's benefit season in England.

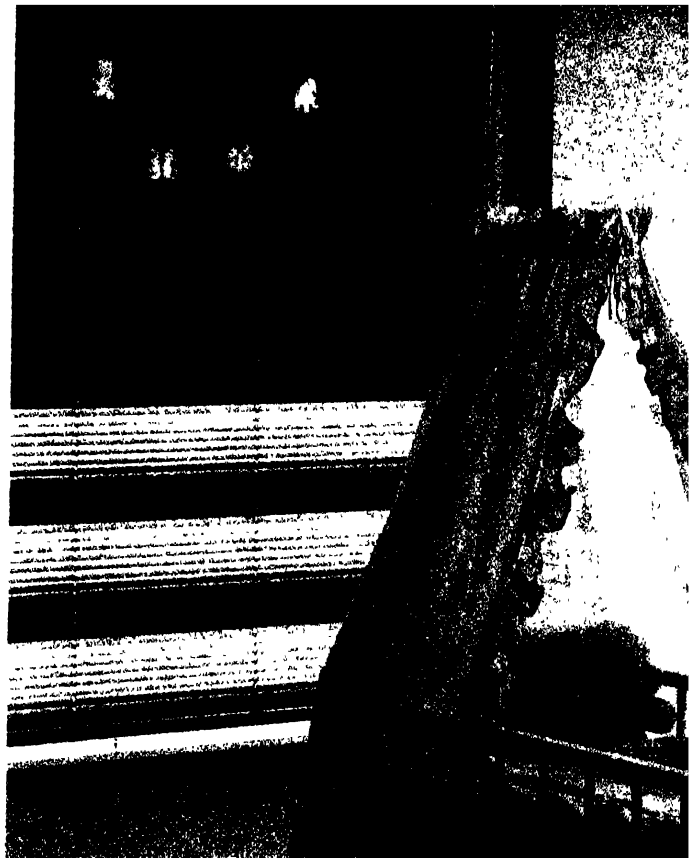
Imran Khan writes in his editorial comment: "They (the editorial board) will help to make *Cricket Life* truly international, a magazine which will cover all the issues and the development of the game in all countries. Other magazines barely touch on other countries, and are usually locally based."

But this is precisely where *Cricket Life* fails. What may interest the English cricket enthusiast may leave the Indian cricket fanatic cold. And vice versa. Besides, the layout is, at best, austere.

Buy the issue if you are a die-hard Imran Khan fan. And don't say you weren't warned.

Mudar Pathorya

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Drama of trauma

Rael Padamsee's play Extremities examines the implications of sexual violence

A word of caution: if your plans for the evening include a celebratory dinner at a restaurant after watching a show of *Extremities*, forget it. For, Rael Padamsee's second directorial venture is not the stuff of light-hearted entertainment. At best, it is a thought-provoking play that delves into a woman's psyche. At worst, the 'violence' it exudes may prove a little overpowering for an unsuspecting audience.

Says Rael Padamsee, the play's young director: "When I first read the script four years ago, I couldn't go through it—it was so awesome." But with one play behind her (*The Interpreters*) she was ready for "something small, experimental and something different".

The result: *Extremities*, which deals with the traumatic experience of a young girl, Marjorie, who is sexually abused (the crime stops short of rape), and her interaction with her molester Raul. Will she call for the cops? And if she does, will the molester be convicted? The chances are slim, for there are no witnesses to the incident and Marjorie has no bruises to validate her charges. There is also the daunting prospect of social ostracism.

"The extremes that the woman is pushed to by the rapist, society and a non-existent legal system is what I have tried to highlight," says Padamsee. In the process, she has focused on a lot of inter-related issues. As she elaborates: "Rape is not just about physical violence but also about the mental cruelty that (in this case) Raul, Marjorie's attacker, inflicts, not just on her but also on her two friends, Patricia and Terry."

As Vijay Tendulkar, noted Marathi playwright points out, Indian theatre and literature tends to gloss over the act of rape, preferring to deal with what happens next, as that is easier to tackle. Tendulkar admits, though, that showing

rape on stage is much more difficult than depicting it on screen. But he feels that theatre luminaries in the country have failed to grapple with the issue because few have attempted to "understand the woman's psyche. More often than not, prejudices come into play and one either condemns rape, or tries to explain it away". The peculiar Indian self-consciousness when it comes to sex is also to blame. "Sex is either treated as a scandal, a joke, or a hush-hush thing that has to be kept under wraps," he says. And it's probably this attitude that has prevented a "serious analysis" of rape on Indian stage.

(Clockwise from below) Rael Padamsee; and scenes from her play *Extremities*: emphasising the horror of molestation



Not that the West is free from prejudices. In fact, *Extremities* is based on a play (by the same name) written by American playwright Willavi Mastrosimone. The American version had tried to bust two "lethal myths": that "women cause rape and that rape is for sex". Mastrosimone elaborates in the author's note published along with the original script of *Extremities*: "Rape is done to degrade, humiliate and intimidate."

Rael Padamsee, too, has succeeded in portraying the real and imaginary fears of a rape victim, and in conveying to the audience the intrinsic violence that such an experience inevitably generates. And the fact that she staged *Extremities* in smaller theatres like the Prithvi helped. Here, she says, "The involvement of the

audience is total and people are less prone to eating popcorn and chatting among themselves while the play is in progress."

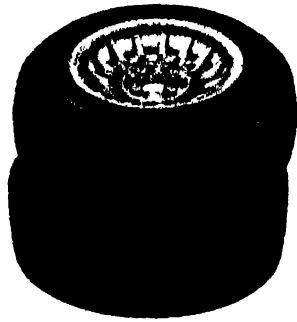
While Padamsee maintains that the theme of the play is "universal", she did consult with lawyers as to whether Marjorie's experience had an Indian relevance. Only to discover that rape had the same implications everywhere.

As Anand Grover, the lawyer with whom Padamsee held many a meeting before staging her play, says: "In an Indian court of law, too, a rape victim has to first prove beyond reasonable doubt that she was raped and then, conviction depends on whether the judge will believe her. It's one person's word against the other's. Here it is a judge's verdict that decides the matter. And since most of them are men, it is their biases that count."

Perhaps the point that Rael is trying to make is best expressed in the theme song: *For don't you see, can't you see, this is not my crime.*

Adite Chatterjee/Bombay

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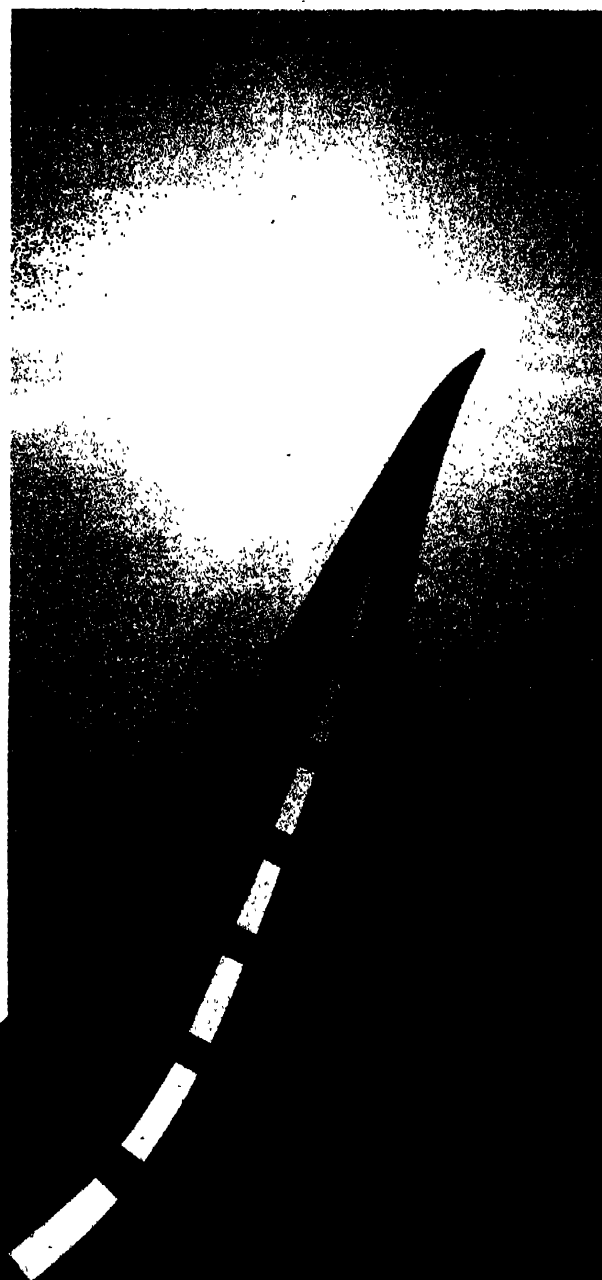
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Memories of another Dé

● Is *Socialite Evenings*, the soon-to-be-published novel by gossip-queen Shobha Dé about actress Neena Gupta? Apparently not. Why then does a picture of the daring Ms Gupta adorn the cover of Dé's book?

Apparently, Penguin India wanted a picture



(Above) *Socialite Evenings* and (below right) Neena Gupta: a Shobha Dé (left) surrogate

of Dé on the cover and the lady understandably balked. Reasoning that a picture of Marine Drive by night alone would not sell too many copies, the

publishers looked around for a face to plaster over the cover. And Ms Gupta was the ideal candidate.

Being a respectable publishing operation, Penguin naturally took Gupta's permission, but the mystery remains: why Neena? Is one of the characters based on her? Or is she a Dé surrogate?

Read the book and find out.



GAUTAM RAJADHYAKSHA



ASHOK VASHI

Banned!



Romesh Bhandari: caving in to pressure

● It was the classic case of using a cannonball to kill a bird.

Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Romesh Bhandari, caved in tamely to pressure exerted by fundamentalist organisations and banned the Pakistani play *Bakra Kishton Par*, the current rage of the capital's video circuit.

All right, it wasn't great entertainment, but surely the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) reaction was a trifle excessive. The Parishad and its ruffian squad, the Bajrang Dal, announced their intention of visiting shops selling the cassette (which "injures the feeling of the majority of Indians"), and setting all copies ablaze.

Romesh Bhandari capitulated without even the semblance of a fight. The cassette was banned in the Union Territory of Delhi with immediate effect. As expected, VHP secretary general B.L. Sharma welcomed the decision. But only after instructing the government in his best brow-beating, hectoring manner, that "in future the intelligence of our country should keep a sharp eye on such matters".

The right to reply

● He had the "right of reply", Dr Subramaniam Swamy maintained, and *The Indian Post* had no business infringing upon it.

So, the Janata Party maverick charged off to the Press Council in high dudgeon, complaining of the *Post*'s non-coverage of the press conference he had called to counter the effect of R.K. Hegde's statements to the press, which came in response to Swamy's...well, okay, never mind.

Subramaniam Swamy: lost out



RAJESH SANYAL

The Press Council was not impressed by his arguments, though. Justice R.S. Sarkaria, ruling on the case, maintained: "No principle of journalistic ethics obliges an editor to fill his columns with rejoinder upon rejoinder in an endless chain reaction."

To add to his discomfort, Swamy, who had made much of the *Post*'s slur campaign against him, could not pinpoint anything defamatory in the articles the newspaper carried on him.

The humiliation of Swamy is, then, very nearly complete.

Making it big

● Hers weren't the conventional chocolate-box looks. And television gawkers didn't know quite what to make of the tall, leggy Radha Seth of the luscious figure and come-hither voice, when she first appeared on the box, co-hosting *Quiz Time '86* with Siddharth Basu, whose eyebrow quivered even more intensely under the strain of keeping up with Seth's magnetic telepersonality.

Masculine, awkward, too Westernised, misfit, were only some of the adjectives used to dismiss Radha. No, she'd never make it, was the general consensus.

Only it hasn't worked out that way. Seth gave a scene-stealing performance in S. Kshirsagar's *Jugalbandi*



Radha Seth: unconventional good looks

and is now flooded with work: *Mahanagar*, *Manzil Apni Apni*, *Kathasagar*, *Mr Yogi* and *Rishta* being only

a few of her forthcoming serials.

What can one say, but move over Neena Gupta.



ASHOK DAS



RAJU UPADHYAYA

(From left) Rajesh Khaitan and Shatrughan Sinha: stalemate

Open mouth, insert foot

● Shatrughan Sinha's big mouth, said industry folk, was bound to land him in big trouble one day.

And it has. In an interview to the *Stardust*, Sinha was quoted as saying: "I'm not a Marwari or a business-

man, with a typical *bania* attitude. They salute the party in power, they are not the sons of India..."

When the predictable hue and cry broke out, with Marwaris claiming to have been maligned, Sinha claimed that he'd been misquoted. He'd only talked about some of the Marwaris he claimed, not the entire

community.

But Rajesh Khaitan, Congress(I) MLA from Calcutta, wasn't buying this argument. Outraged at the star's statement he filed a case against him for "provoking communal feelings and bringing about disharmony, hatred and ill-will between different castes and communities." The next thing Sinha knew was that there was a bailable warrant of arrest against him.

In the meanwhile, Khaitan called for an apology from the star for his intemperate remarks, challenging Sinha to prove that he had never acted in any movie financed, produced, distributed or exhibited by a *bania*.

Sinha, for his part, has refused to back down. Says he: "There is no question of apologising when I have not said anything offensive. If I apologise now I would be succumbing to pressure."

The stalemate continues.

Sonia lao, desh bachao

● If Indira was India, then Sonia is, at least, Agra. For, the slogan breaking the quiet of this provincial city is: "Sonia lao, desh bachao."

Apparently, a section of Congressmen, wishing to ingratiate themselves with the first family, have formed an organisation with the avowed aim of convincing Soniaji to contest the next general election from Agra. Named, appropriately enough, Sonia Lao Desh Bachao, the organisation has swung into its task in right earnest, plastering the walls of the city with posters and handbills demanding the junior Mrs G's candidature. Next on the agenda are public rallies, where speakers will exhort the lady into taking the crucial step into party politics.



Sonia Gandhi: Into party politics?

Well, you've got to admit, it sure beats the hell out of having your birthday celebrated by loyal Congressmen. Even if they did get the date a little wrong.

Roll over

Nizam's, the archetypal Muslim dhaba goes in for a change of image

Old-timers will tell you about the days when Calcutta was the gastronomic capital of India, when Firpo's served the best continental food in the region, when Flury's pastries were the talk of Asia and when the city's Chinese community ran a variety of excellent restaurants.

That was a long time ago. Firpo's has long since closed. Flury's belongs to the

Apeejay Pauls and the Chinese have moved on. Today, Calcutta is a vast gastronomic wasteland that is around 20 years behind every other major Indian city. Of its two non-five star hot-spots, the Sky Room serves the kind of Anglo-Indian menu that you found on Bombay's Churchgate Street in the early 1960's and Amber specialises in the 'Punjabi restaurant' food that was created in the no-man's land inhabited by the owners of the Kwality restaurant chain. The city's one first-rate restaurant—the Oberoi Grand's Rotisserie—is much too expensive for most Calcuttans; those who can afford it, tend to be vegetarians.

In this culinary desert, there is, however, one oasis of quality. Nizam's is not the sort of place you would take a girl to on your first date, and—to be entirely honest—not everything on the menu is particularly special. But despite seeming like your average Muslim *dhaba*, it still manages to produce Calcutta's one non-vegetarian speciality: the eponymous Nizam's Roll.

It is difficult to capture the flavour of the roll in words. Essentially, it consists of *maida paratha* freshly made on a *tawa* in front of you. As it begins to brown, the cook breaks an egg and scrambles it on the *paratha*. Once the edges of the egg start to curl, the *paratha* is taken off the heat. Then a kebab, which has been prepared earlier, is put in the centre and freshly sliced onion and masala (including pure lemon juice) are added. The *paratha* is then quickly rolled into a cylinder,

and tissue paper is wrapped around the lower half to facilitate easy eating. Ideally, the roll should be eaten there and then while it is still hot from the *tawa* but many office-goers send peons to have it collected for their lunch.

The kind of kebab used for the roll varies. The original was made from boneless beef but obviously this did not go down too well in Calcutta. Though

Nizam's still offers beef and minced beef rolls (without egg), most people prefer the mutton and chicken varieties. Die-hard carnivores can get *khiri* kebab rolls (made from cow's udders) while vegetarians get a particularly anaemic potato roll.

Such is the fame of the Nizam roll that Irshad Alam, the owner can reel off the names of the celebrities who queue up for it: The Nawab of Pataudi and his Begum, Shabana Azmi, Mithun Chakraborty, Dilip Vengsarkar, Mohinder Amarnath and such West Bengal politicians as Abdus Sattar and Somn Mitra. "In fact," boasts Alam, "during the Emergency, Kamal Nath used to order 200-250 rolls and take them to Delhi." Characteristically, Nath told Nizam's owners that Sanjay Gandhi wanted the rolls.

Nizam's serves other kinds of food too and one gets the impression that the restaurant is tiring of its reputation for rolls. Says



(Clockwise from top left) The Nizam's 'chef' at work; its kebabs are a speciality; customers at the restaurant: one oasis of quality

It's not the sort of place you'd take a girl on your first date, but it manages to produce Calcutta's one non-vegetarian speciality: the eponymous Nizam's Roll

head cook Abdul Aziz, "I can get biryani for 100 people ready in just four hours." And the menu boasts of such dishes as Beef Stoo (*sic*) and Chicken Curry with Egg.

Sadly, the yuppification of Nizam's has begun. Alam, the grandson of the founder, claims that business is bad. Accordingly, he is building an air-conditioned 'family room', putting up signs saying 'No beef served here' and—God forbid—adding Chinese food to the menu.

What next? Chicken Egg Spring Roll, perhaps.

Subadhra Rangamani/Calcutta

Shakti Kapoor has never believed in doing things by half measures. Even his womanising has always been a notch above the other industry wolves. (Ask wife Shivangi.)

But now the excess seems to be carrying over into his professional life, too. Indiscriminate signing has ensured his presence in over 265 films in a career extending over 10 years, and Shakti is, perhaps, the only villain to have sung no less than 40 songs on screen.

Little wonder then, that Kapoor's begun to get ideas above his station—he refuses to sign any further films unless he's billed as hero.

GAUTAM PATOLE



Neeta Puri: eat your heart out

It was an explicable change of heart. Pakistani pop singer Hasan Jehangir was all set to sue Venus Enterprises for plagiarising his songs (including the famous *Hawa hawa*) and using them in their video film *Don II*. And the next thing you knew was that he was releasing their cassette at a function held in Hotel Sea Rock, with celebrities such as Jackie Shroff, Aditya Pancholi, Kim, and Vijay Arora in attendance. Also on the scene was Sabiha, better known as the nymphet whom Rajesh Khanna did/did not

molest.

It was popular video star Jeet Upendra who was in his element, though. And with good reason. For, the grapevine has it that he's all set to make it big in movies, having been signed on by the top banners in town.

Eat your heart out, Neeta Puri.

Some years ago, Mala Sinha had begun carting her fat little daughter, the engagingly named Dinky, to filmland parties, in the hope that she would catch the eye of some producers. But junior Sinha, with more chins than there are in the Hong Kong telephone directory, proved to be a non-starter. And, as an actress commented bitchily: "With good reason."

Well, Dinky's re-surfaced, this time in a more streamlined incarnation, and has begun to attend *filmi* do-s yet again—with protective mama

Juhi Chawla: waning popularity



Hasan Jehangir: mollified

in tow, of course.

Not that she allows her chaperon to queer her pitch, spending all her time with producers, big and small. And seeing the enthusiasm with which she performs her flirtatious number, it won't be long before she manages to land a role or two.

Govinda's *nakhra*s never seem to end. And producer Sudhakar Bokade has been

suffering the brunt of them, in recent times. In Madras to shoot for his latest venture *Izzatdaar*, Bokade had arranged for a shoot at the city's VGP gardens. The entire unit, including director K. Bapaiah, dance master Kamal and leading lady Madhuri Dixit, reported at



Govinda: playing truant

the dot of nine. And then began the long, and as it turned out, futile wait for the hero. Govinda played truant, getting one of his minions to ring up to say that 'Saheb' had a blood pressure problem.

The public taste, it is a-changing. At least, that of Indians settled abroad. Or why would the recent star-studded show held in Birmingham, England, draw only 50 per cent attendance, despite having matinee idols such as Sridevi, Aamir Khan, Sunjay Dutt, Neelam, Juhi Chawla and Anupam Kher among the list of performers.

Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. And the latest in teaching aids is the educational video film. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been trying for years to introduce such teaching techniques in the country. In 1984, it set up the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) Delhi, and State Institutes of Educational Technology (SIET) in Hyderabad, Patna, Ahmedabad, Pune, Bhubaneswar and Lucknow, to achieve this purpose.

This effort is now bearing fruit. So much so, that the NCERT was able to organise a festival of children's educational video films in Mysore last month, where producers of the various centres got to see each other's work and learn from creative interaction. There were two sections to the festival: Competitive and the Panorama, and the jury, which had two students of Class VII on it, was headed by filmmaker Sai Paranjape, who has herself made a film on adult education.

It was a mixed fare which was presented to the audience, which included educational TV film producers, educationists, and film critics, apart from the ordinary viewers. Some of the films were of 'international quality' according to Sai Paranjape. The award-winning *Honge Kamyab*, by Bibu Das of SIET, Bhubaneswar, for instance. Even before the jury announced the verdict, it was clear to most that the film, which relates the story of a handicapped child who overcomes his disability through sheer tenacity, was a winner. Such was the sensitivity of the treatment that most felt that it should be shown on prime time television, to ensure as wide a viewership as possible.

Not all efforts were quite so commendable, though. The Andhra Pradesh SIET's production *Chiranjeevibhavo*, for one, stirred up quite a controversy. Based on the story of Markendeya, who in accordance with a prophecy made by Shiva, was ordained to die after attaining sixteen years of age, the film depicts the boy's struggle for his life. Confronted with the fact of impending death, he begins praying to Shiva, clinging on to a shivalingam, until the god appears before him dancing in divine fury. And then, pleased with the boy's unquestioning devotion, grants him immortality.

It's showtime!



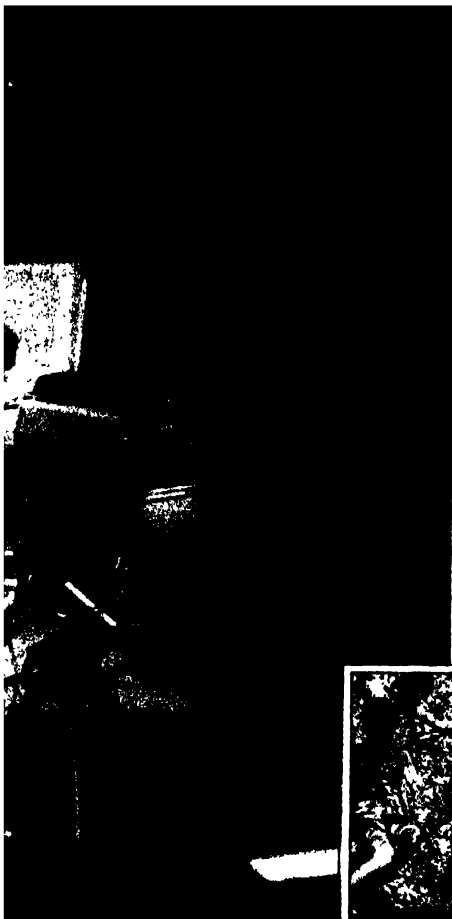
*Educational video films for children catch on—
but prove to be of indifferent quality*

Most found the film a shameful essay in religious obscurantism, but the producers had a ready defence. They argued that the film meant to teach the child that nothing was impossible of achievement, not even immortality, if

one pursued the objective with dedication. But the argument found few takers. Most people felt that the film, meant for a target audience of 9-11 year olds, and already telecast during the INSAT For Education Programme, made out a case for superstition. With the exception of Ramranjan Prasad Singh, production in-charge SIET, Patna. He felt that *Chiranjeevibhavo* in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the New Education Policy, depicted the rich cultural heritage of the country.

Most producers appear to be influenced by filmi kitsch. Child actors are made to behave like miniature adults, and the garish sets and backdrops used are an insult to good taste

The SIETs were set up with the primary objective of developing news-based programmes for children in the 5-11 age group, which reflected the local environment, culture and language. And as Professor C.H.K. Misra, director of the festival, and a well-known Oriya short story writer, pointed out, the production of good educational films requires research, in-depth analysis, sensitive design and a band of well-trained and committed workers.



(Clockwise from top left) The making of an educational film: most producers lack professional training; an outdoor shoot in progress: paucity of resources; a scene from *Honge Kamyab*: award-winning effort

None of these prerequisites are in evidence in India. Perhaps the greatest disadvantage educational filmmakers here suffer from is the lack of professional training. In fact, after watching some of the execrable stuff churned out by them, Sai Paranjape was forced to comment that many of the films entered into the competitive section showed that their producers did not know the ABC of filmmaking.

Mridula Sushil, of SIET Lucknow, agreed with Paranjape on this one. "If somebody breaks a basic rule of filmmaking knowingly, then he may create a masterpiece. But when our producers

violate them it is because they are not familiar with them. No training of any sort is provided to them," she rues. Arun Katatkar of Pune, whose film *Gammat Jammatt Shabdanchi*, got the best team award, agreed with this assessment.

The jury was unanimous on the score that the films in the competitive section were of a very uneven quality. Paranjape, in fact, went to the extent of declaring that showing some of these films to children would be nothing short of a "national crime". When it was pointed out that most of the entries had already been aired, she suggested the formation of a screening body which would select or reject films for telecast.

Perhaps the most appalling fact was that most of the producers appeared to have been influenced by *filmi* kitsch. The

Chaugule of SIET Pune, made the festival worth its while.

Jury member Vibha Parthasarathy, principal of the Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, pointed out that children's films should aim at an integrated development of the child's head, heart and hands. And in the making of such films, their needs, areas of experience and aesthetic requirements should be kept in mind or the exercise would be ultimately self-defeating.

But in the absence of any functional autonomy for the producers of SIET, that's precisely how things are working out in India. All those involved in the production of these films are treated like any other category of government servants, without any allowances made for the creative nature of their work.

NCERT and its constituent units like the CIET and the six branches of SIETs have done their bit by making the best hardware available to the filmmakers. And it certainly goes to the credit of individual producers that they have produced good work, despite the various constraints they have been working under.

But even these programmes, of dubious quality on most occasions, very often never reach their target audience. Though telecast by INSAT-1B in five languages on a regular basis, the rural audience never gets to see them. According to a producer from SIET Pune, in Vidarbha region, 1,000 Direct Reception Sets (DRS), have been installed in the villages, but due to lack of proper maintenance and theft of parts, such as the disc antenna, transmission never really took off. A Patna producer disclosed that according to a government survey, out of the 700 DRS installed in the rural areas, only seven were found to be in working condition.

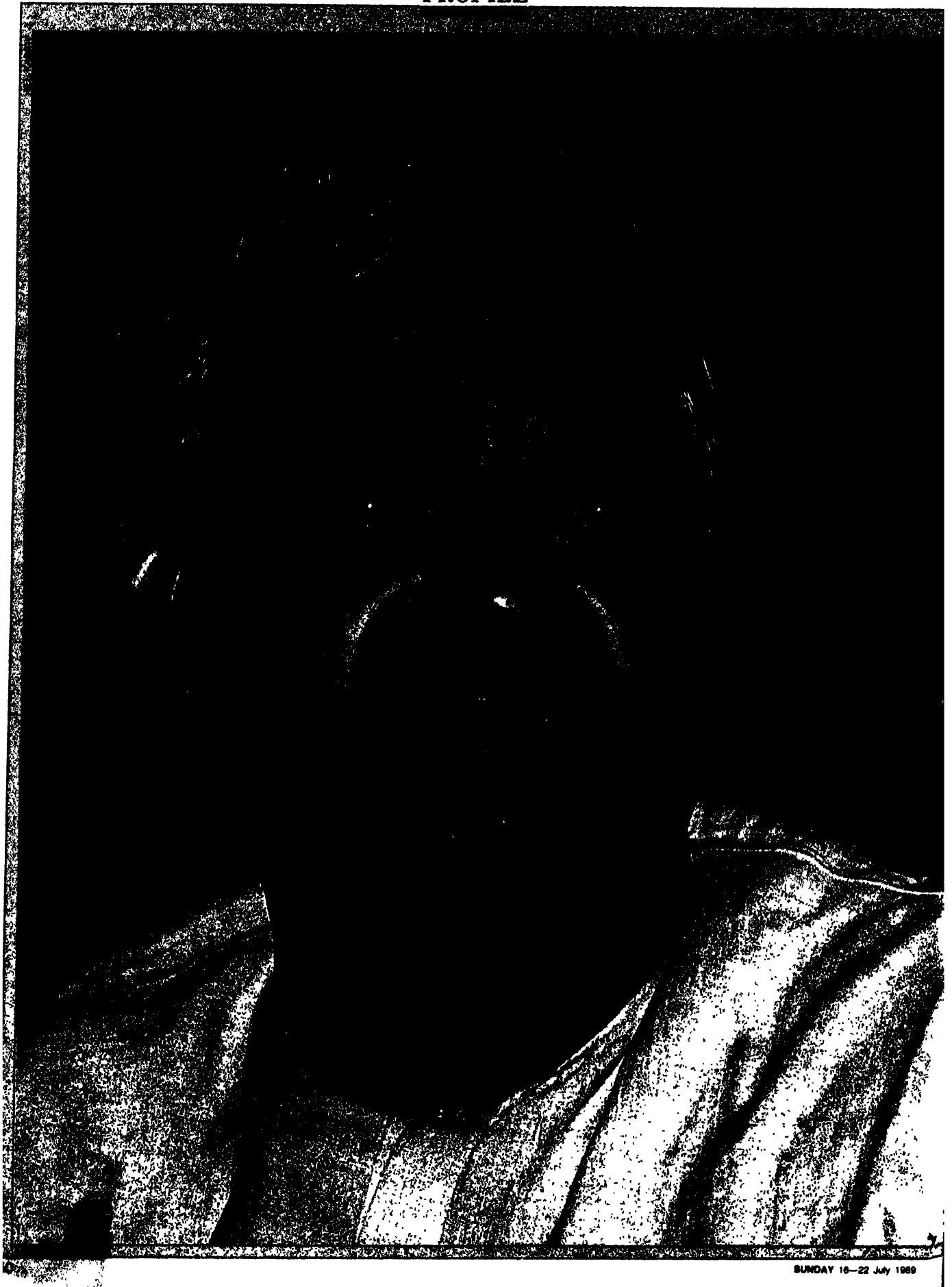
Moreover as the educational films are telecast from 9.30 am onwards, not many school-going children get to see them anyway, even if the DRS is working.

But audience or no audience, TV educational films continue to be made—the good, the bad and the indifferent. **Kuldeep Kumar/New Delhi**



entries from Andhra Pradesh, for instance. All the child actors were made to behave like miniature adults, and the garish sets and backdrops used were an insult to the audience. But the occasional good film, *Kagaz Ke Khel* made by Dharam Prakash of CIET, Delhi (which won a special mention by the jury), and *Vasantatali Gharkule* by Bipin Chandra

PROFILE



Why Vajpayee failed

Because it was better to be right

When Aneurin Bevan, the late great British socialist leader, used to be asked to tone down his radicalism, he would invariably retort, "I know what happens to people who stay in the middle of the road: they get run over."

Nobody has ever accused Atal Behari Vajpayee, the ailing Bharatiya Janata Party leader, of socialist radicalism, but in most other respects, his political career has demonstrated the truth of Bevan's axiom: abandon a dogma for a centrist position only if you want to kiss your ambitions goodbye.

You remember the early Vajpayee, of course? The rabble-rousing, fiery proponent of Hindu *rashtra*, of greater India? The man who told us that secularism did not mean giving over the rights of the majority to a bunch of (possibly seditious) minorities? And the knicker-wearing RSS die-hard who celebrated the virtues of discipline because only strength would enable Hindus to fight for their rights?

Strong stuff. And everybody who was brought up as a good secularist was outraged: was this man *serious*? Could anybody *really* support this crypto-fascist and his RSS buddies?

THEN CAME the Emergency.

Suddenly, nice, secular Indira Gandhi turned into a dreadful, old tyrant who locked up the Opposition, suspended civil liberties and razed Turkman Gate. The RSS had the only underground network among the Opposition and, now, even the 'secular' parties found they had to make common cause with the knicker brigade. When the nightmare ended and Janata took over, the Jan Sangh-RSS contingent found itself an equal partner in the new regime and Vajpayee became foreign minister.

It was the two years from 1977 to 1979 that transformed Vajpayee's image. As Charan Singh stabbed Morarji Desai and Jagjivan Ram played out his sordid power games, Vajpayee emerged as the only senior minister with any integrity. Moreover, as foreign minister, he cosied up to General Zia, telling the Pakistanis, "Forget my old statements—I was in Opposition then." Nor did he show any signs of the Hindu chauvinism that had long been associated with him.

All of this made people wonder: had they misjudged him? Perhaps the RSS did

not require its members to grow horns on their heads and carry pitchforks.

Vajpayee seized his opportunity. Sensing that the BJP (which the Jan Sangh eventually metamorphosed into) could become a legitimate Opposition party, he pushed it towards the centre, distanced it from the RSS and junked the old Hindu power slogans.

A SHREWD move? Well, maybe, but there was a problem. From 1980 to 1984, as Vajpayee was leading his party into the mainstream, the country was shifting towards the right. Socialism had fallen into disrepute; 'profit' and 'liberalisation' were the new buzz-words. Moreover, the Hindu backlash that the Jan Sangh had spent years waiting for now seemed to be building up.

It was all a little unfortunate. Finally, India was moving towards the Jan Sangh/BJP view. And the BJP was not in a position to take advantage of it. As Vajpayee gaped in bewilderment, the Congress(I), first under Indira Gandhi and then under her son, grabbed its chance. Mrs Gandhi ditched Fabianism for 'pragmatism' and scoured the country looking for temples to visit (ideally, on prime time television). And Rajiv played on the old Jan Sangh theme of Hindu strength by casting the Sikhs as the seditious minority.

It all happened too fast for Vajpayee. In 1984, Madhavrao Scindia robbed him of a Lok Sabha seat and the RSS made it clear that he had led the party to disaster. A new Vijayaraje Scindia-led faction tried to take control of the BJP and Vajpayee stepped down as president.

He has spent the last four years battling depression and ill-health, missing such BJP triumphs as the Haryana Assembly elections in 1987. And it is fair to say that the party hasn't really missed him.

While L. K. Advani has been a less than inspiring leader, the RSS has found that it functions best through the S. Gurumurthy-R. N. Goenka-J. K. Jain-Ram Jethmalani kind of person and has ignored the BJP. And the party has stumbled along, never achieving the kind of national prominence that Vajpayee had hoped for.

A few months ago, he indicated that he was finally ready to return to the fray. "The Congress(I) stole our policy in 1984," he admitted. "We won't let it happen again."

But for Vajpayee, it may already be too late. ■

The strategy was to move from the right to the centre. The problem was that the country was too busy shifting from the centre to the right. Vajpayee's timing was all wrong

The holy terror

The Ananda Marg is alive and well and living in Purulia

Not many have heard of the place as yet. Fewer still have dared to visit the area. But Ananda Nagar, near the bustling township of Purulia on the Bengal-Bihar border, is fast acquiring a saffron tinge. The rugged hills and the undulating terrain is being levelled and round-the-clock construction is going on at a frenzied pace. Already, schools, colleges, hospitals, living quarters and even captive power plants and solar generating units have come up. When complete, Ananda Nagar, the new global headquarters of the Ananda Marg, will put to shame Rayneesh's Pune ashram or Satya Sai Baba's Whitefield complex in Bangalore. After running his empire from within the fortified confines of Tiljala in Calcutta for over a decade, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the unassuming chief of the Ananda Marg, is once again on the move with his followers.

Though the Margis deny it vehemently, the Purulia district authorities have already sounded the West Bengal government on the activities of the Ananda Marg and their plans to shift their headquarters from Calcutta to Purulia. The intelligence department has even prepared a confidential note detailing the reasons for the Ananda Marg shifting to Purulia. The barren and almost inaccessible tracts that cut off Ananda Nagar from human habitation, according to the intelligence sleuths, make for an ideal hideout.

Moreover, the Ananda Marg, which has expanded its operations considerably over the past few years—it claims that it has at least 30 lakh members spread over 36 countries—has been looking for virgin territory to set up its headquarters. The hills around Ananda Nagar, where the Marg owned over 500 acres of land, was rocky and barren. As there are very few villages adjoining the place, it provided the Margis with an opportunity to expand its area without much resistance from the locals. But, as luck would have it, the Margis found themselves in trouble even in the barren tracts of Purulia.

The first to lodge complaints against the Margis was the district forest department authorities, who charged the saffron-robed *sanyasins* with en-

croaching on forest land. In March this year, the forest officials, accompanied by a posse of policemen, entered Ananda Nagar and demolished a number of concrete structures. The operation led to a discovery that woke the district top brass out of their slumber.

Recalls Debashis Ghosh, the deputy superintendent of police who was present along with the forest officials on the spot: "We destroyed a number of houses that had been constructed illegally. Inside some of them we found weapons, including sophisticated automatic rifles with laser devices."

This is not the first time though that the Margis have come into conflict with the Purulia administration. Even earlier, there have often been bloody clashes between the Margis and the

locals over land disputes. Complains Swapan Banerjee, the chairman of the CPI(M)-controlled Purulia *zilla parishad*: "The Margis are grabbing land in a well-planned manner. They are buying off land from poor peasants and encroaching on government vested land using force."

Ever since the Ananda Marg was founded by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar in 1955, the organisation has incurred the hostility of both the people and the politicians. Former Union home minister Uma Shankar Dixit had once described the Ananda Marg as "a fascist organisation, more dangerous than the RSS, which is out to overthrow the democratic set-up of the country". Saroj Mukherjee, the chairman of the ruling Left Front government in West Bengal and the general secretary of the



CPI(M)'s state unit, alleged in 1985 that the Margis had plotted to kill chief minister Jyoti Basu.

In fact, the Margis led a troubled life all along. Soon after Ananda Marg set up headquarters in the tribal-dominated Purulia district in 1967, locals entered their *ashram* and killed five Margis. Prabhat Ranjan decided to shift lock, stock and barrel to Cooch Behar in North Bengal. But violence seemed to be following the Margis and in March 1969, bloody clashes took place between the Margis and the CPI(M) workers. Once again Sarkar was forced to flee. This time to Ranchi.

The Margis' stay in the picturesque tourist resort did not last long either. In May 1971, local tribals entered the Ananda Marg's spacious *ashram*, beat up the *sanyasins* and plundered the area. Sarkar promptly deserted the place and left for Patna with his followers.

By now, the Marg had a new enemy: the police. Soon after the Margis had left

for Patna, the cops raided the Ranchi premises of Ananda Marg and recovered human skulls and weapons. Sarkar was arrested from the Pataliputra Colony in Patna but was released following court orders.

But it was in 1971 that Sarkar and his empire suffered the greatest blow, one which convinced the people that the Ananda Marg was a dangerous and diabolical cult which had been hiding its real intentions under a veneer of spiritual hocus-pocus. Marg Mata and wife of P.R. Sarkar, Uma, left the organisation with a number of Ananda Marg functionaries. What was more damaging, Uma Sarkar complained to the police that her husband was "committing abominable crimes in the name of *dharm*". Though the police could not lay their hands on Sarkar immediately, they nevertheless cornered the Marg chief a few months later.

In December 1971, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Prabhat Ranjan from his Patna residence on charges of being involved in the

murder of six Margis who had deserted the ranks. For the first time perhaps, the Ananda Marg showed signs of cracking up. There were protests by Margis throughout the country demanding the release of their guru. After languishing in jail for quite some time, Sarkar was finally acquitted by the Patna High Court in 1984. In the meantime, the Ananda Marg had shifted to Calcutta primarily to escape from the clutches of the Patna administration.

But Calcutta too proved to be as hostile a place as the rest. The Marg not only ran into trouble with the people, it incurred the wrath of the ruling communist government. There have been frequent skirmishes between the Margis and the CPI(M) cadres but the worst possible expression of mob violence took place in April 1982 when 17 Margis were burnt alive near the global headquarters of the Ananda Marg at Tiljala. Though the Margis insist that CPI(M) cadres were behind the killing, intelligence reports indicate that it was indeed the work of an irate mob which turned

• Margis performing the *tandav nritya*; (inset) mass cremation of Margis after the Kasba massacre: victims of mob violence



Why are the saffron-robed Margis the target of mob violence time and again? The hatred of the people towards the Margis has a lot to do with the philosophy and secret nature of the Ananda Marg's activities

violent following rumours that the Margis had kidnapped several children.

Why are the saffron-robed Margis the target of mob hostility time and again and why are political parties so dead against the cult? The hatred of the people towards the Margis has a lot to do with the philosophy and the secret nature of the Ananda Marg's activities. In fact, the world of the Ananda Margis has never been made public creating unnecessary confusion among the masses. The Marg philosophy, which is based on P.R. Sarkar's PROUT or Progressive Utilisation theory, is at best a half-baked amalgamation of notions picked up from nearly every religious

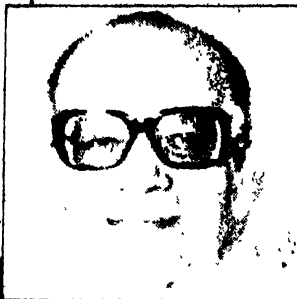
The man and his empire

The life and times of Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar

There is an air of simplicity about him that sets him apart from the other godmen of his generation. Clean-shaven and well-built, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the septuagenarian chief of the Ananda Marg, has neither the personality nor the glamour of

Anandamurtiji to his followers—founded the Ananda Marg with just nine followers. Soon, Sarkar's fame spread far and wide and the Marg's PROUT or Progressive Utilisation theory gained acceptance in an era of political and social turmoil.

DILIP BANERJEE



• The Marg headquarters at Tiljala; (Inset) P.R. Sarkar: running the show

Rajneesh, Chandra Swami or Satya Sai Baba. Yet, slowly and silently, Sarkar has built an empire over which he exercises complete control.

P.R. Sarkar's journey towards attaining godhood began over four decades back at Jamalpur in Bihar, where he was a petty accounts clerk with the railways. Early in his career, Sarkar displayed disinterest in earthly achievements. In fact, he told his superiors at the Jamalpur railway workshop that he was more interested in spiritual activities.

On 9 January, 1955, P.R. Sarkar—

But success has its own hazards. The secretive nature of the Ananda Marg's activities spurred the rumour that Sarkar and his followers were propagating a dangerous and diabolical cult. People became suspicious of the Margis and political parties hostile towards Sarkar.

The first expression of public anger towards the Margis came in March 1967, when armed tribals raided the Purulia headquarters of the Ananda Marg, plundered the ashram and hacked five Margis to death. Sarkar fled with a few of his

trusted lieutenants to Ranchi, where they set up a new ashram. But, soon the Margis ran into trouble with the locals there. In May 1971, during the annual festival of the Ananda Marg, locals entered the Ranchi campus and beat up several Marg delegates. Following the clash, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar shifted his headquarters to Patna.

The greatest blow to Sarkar came in 1971 when his wife and Marg, Mata, Uma and his private secretary, Vishokananda Avadhuta, deserted the Ananda Marg. Later, in a statement to the police, Uma Sarkar said that she had left her husband as it had "become impossible for me to be a silent spectator to the inhuman, brutal and senseless happenings in the Marg".

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in December 1971. The charge: instigating his disciples to murder six Margis who had left the organisation in disgust in the jungles of Bihar's Singhbhum district. After languishing in jail for some time, Sarkar was set free in January 1984 after the Patna High Court dismissed the case against him.

But the damage to Sarkar's image had been done. People grew even more suspicious of the Margis. In Calcutta, particularly, where the Ananda Marg was now headquartered, the ruling CPI(M) cadres were openly hostile towards the members of the organisation. In April 1982, seven Ananda Margis were burnt alive by a frenzied mob just outside its global headquarters at Tiljala.

tradition of India. And, the Margis hope to bring about a spiritual revolution through *tantra sadhana* which involves obscurantist rituals like *tandav nritya* (dancing with skulls). Other such activities of the Ananda Margis have created the impression that the organisation is violent and diabolical. In fact, the West Bengal government has imposed a ban on public performances of the *tandav nritya*.

But the hostility of political parties, the CPI(M) in particular, towards the Ananda Marg has a different reason altogether. Though the CPI(M) and the Congress leadership in West Bengal will never agree, there is a feeling among the top brass of both the parties that the Ananda Marg, with enormous funds at its disposal, could one day emerge as a

strong political rival. And that the Ananda Marg has political ambitions is only too well known. Its ultimate aim is to establish an autocratic rule of the Marg and a shady, chauvinistic outfit called the Amra Bangali was floated in the early Seventies to fight elections. The party did contest the Assembly elections a number of times but drew a blank.

Ideological differences between the Marxists and the Margis have also contributed to the bitter feud. While the *avadhutas* have time and again asserted that they have no faith in either Marxism or capitalism, they believe that the only way to salvation lies through Sarkar's Proutism. This has brought the Ananda Margis in direct conflict with both the communists and the Congress.

What is perhaps more disturbing than

the clash of ideals and ideologies is the growing suspicion among the people of the Margis. In Purulia, for instance, the locals are already resenting the presence of the *avadhutas* while in Calcutta, the Margis operate under a security cover provided by their own men. When Marg supremo Sarkar comes out of his modest house at Lake Gardens to visit Tiljala, his motorcade is escorted by gun-toting security guards. But the question is: how long can the Ananda Marg continue its activities in such a hostile environment. Unless the organisation sheds all its pretensions and opens out its world to the masses, the Ananda Margis will continue to be looked upon as fanatics, child-lifters and grave-diggers.

Rajiv Bagchi/Purulia and Calcutta

PERSONALITY

A legend and a legacy

The sprawling Telco complex near Pune is a standing monument to the vision of its architect, Sumant Moolgaokar

The 'creator' of Telco is dead. But the legacy of Sumant Moolgaokar, professional manager turned industrialist extraordinary, is destined to live on in the form of the sprawling Tata Engineering and Locomotive Co., arguably one of the finest engineering complexes anywhere in the world. It was Moolgaokar's exceptional vision and technical wizardry which transformed the former East India Railway Co. manufacturing steam engines into India's largest automobile company rolling out 61,000 commercial vehicles annually. When Moolgaokar stepped down as Telco chairman after a four-decade-long association with the company, he was made chairman emeritus of the automotive giant he had built. And even a week before he breathed his last on 1 July, Moolgaokar, 83, was an active participant at Telco's board meeting.

Perfectionist, humane, and a motivator of men. These attributes of the former Telco chairman were never missed by all those who knew him from close quarters. Remembers Ratan Tata,

heir apparent of the Tata empire, who was bestowed the chairmanship of Telco eight months ago by Moolgaokar himself, amidst opposition from some quarters: "I first met him when I joined Telco as a shopfloor worker in 1962. I remember him cutting through all extraneous aspects and always coming to the crux of the problem. Once, when he was vice-chairman, some of us youngsters had a problem and we approached him. In a few moments the problem was stripped and it looked all so simple. He had this nice style of getting an answer from you by asking the right question."

Ratan Tata also recalls learning certain traits from his former boss. Says he: "Among the things Moolgaokar taught me and which I will always remember, is never to accept the second best, and never to consider soft options. The word impossible did not exist for him. He believed in the philosophy that you just had to find the right people and give them the freedom, and the job would be done." Tata points out an interesting

side to Moolgaokar's personality: he hated paperwork. He always maintained that whatever one had to tell him, could be "put in a page" and he was a "very good listener".

Another doyen of the Tata empire, Darbari Seth, chairman of Tata Chemicals, saw Moolgaokar as a "great technocrat-industrialist and one of the true builders of new India". The Telco works which bear his stamp, easily rank "among the best engineering complexes anywhere in our part of the world". Praising Moolgaokar's uncompromising commitment to quality and excellence, Seth says, "He was a model which Indian industry would do well to emulate. Telco men under Ratan Tata's leadership are heirs to a rich heritage left by Moolgaokar." Tata himself echoes these sentiments when he says: "He had an eye for detail and would never take a conventional path if there was a new way of doing it. His keenness to encourage technological interest and shun the traditional path were the keys to his ability to motivate people."



Sumant Moolgaokar: engineering wizard



The sleek Tatamobiles at the launching ceremony

But the finest monument to Moolgaokar's exceptional vision as an industrialist is the gigantic Telco complex at Pimpri on the outskirts of Pune. When he first went to this barren wasteland decades ago to give shape to his dream many in industry had then called it "Moolgaokar's folly", says R. V. Pandit, owner of Business Press and CBS India. However, by the time Moolgaokar called it quits formally, he had moulded the Pimpri wasteland into a Rs 1,676-crore automotive giant, second only to Tata Steel in size. Says Pandit:

"He was a moulder of men and materials and his vision was so tremendous that till about a year ago when ill-health forced him to quit, he held the title of 'India's best manager'. Like Darbari Seth, Pandit too refers to Moolgaokar as an "industrialist in the real sense of the word." He adds: "Moolgaokar was not a major shareholder in his company. Yet he imbibed what the founding fathers of the house of Tata stood for, in fact, much better than what the Tata family members did themselves. Moolgaokar created a corporation that is universally recognised as the best." And about his spirit, Pandit points out: "He never went to Delhi, like so many industrialists do. When the government liberalised the economy, other automobile makers faced the crunch of competition, but Telco's sales kept soaring."

If he was an industrial visionary, he was a technical wizard too with a deep commitment to research and design. Perhaps the finest legacy that he has left

die manufacturer, besides a strong ancillary base. The rest is contemporary automobile industry history: for the first time in the world, the Japanese juggernaut was contained and then given a beating. In 12 months' time, the Tata LCV was selling more than the much-vaunted Japanese models.

Moolgaokar was not one to sit back and merely savour the victory. He followed up with another LCV in mid-1987 and then, in the middle of 1988, the Tatamobile—a sleek but sturdy pick-up van—hit the road, capturing the imagination of intra-city transporters.

Moolgaokar was a perfectionist and a multi-faceted personality. Says industrialist Keshub Mahindra: "He was a man of many virtues and interests and, whether at work or with his hobbies, he had a penchant for excellence. Years ago, he suddenly took to shooting, excelled in it, dropped it and took to photography. He was a superb photographer and did his own developing and

printing." But, adds Mahindra: "What is admirable in the man is that he never publicised his photographic abilities which were exceptional. He kept it a closely guarded secret." One person who was 'in' on Moolgaokar's secret is V.F. Banaji, in charge of Telco's manpower. Says Banaji: "He was a photographer of incredible ability. Whether he was shooting tribals or nature, his work was beautiful. And he always encouraged those who were interested in photography."

For Moolgaokar, men mattered the most at all times. According to Walter Saldanha, chairman and managing director of Chaitra Advertising, the truck driver was everything for him. He looked at advertising with the same eye for excellence as he did everything else, comments Saldanha. "He would never let us say that the truck was the best or gave the most mileage. He was more interested in giving the truck operator a vehicle with the lowest life cycle cost," says the Chaitra chief who has handled the Telco advertising for years. Recalling an incident, Saldanha says: "Eighteen months ago, we prepared an ad using the Tata robot as a symbol of hi-tech achievement. Everybody was excited about it. But when we showed it to Moolgaokar, he promptly shot it down. He said, 'A robot would convey the wrong impression. The man and his mind are supreme. Modern technology is a by-product of human resources.' Moolgaokar knew how to nurture people's talents and make them strive for excellence."

Yet, technology was not the be all and end all of Moolgaokar's personality. If he had faith in men, he also believed in nature. Once again, the Telco complex at Pimpri bears testimony. Much before ecological conservation began to be seriously discussed in the country, Moolgaokar showed his commitment to the environment. Thousands of trees dot the Telco complex which also includes a mini-lake. He even gifted fruit trees to the villagers living in the periphery of the factory.

However, Sumant Moolgaokar could not see the fulfilment of his most cherished dream: a passenger car. The Union government is yet to take a decision on the Tata proposal to manufacture a car for the Indian market in collaboration with Honda of Japan. While launching the Tatamobile last year, the never-say-die Moolgaokar had said: "Clearance or no clearance, Telco will still make a car." It is upto Ratan Tata now to see the realisation of Moolgaokar's dream.

Oiga Telis/Bombay



Moolgaokar addresses the press after the launch of the Tatamobile with Ratan Tata (second from left): passing on the mantle

behind is the Engineering Research Centre within the Pimpri complex which also speaks volumes of his engineering talents. It was set up to wean Telco away from design dependence, and by the early Eighties, the centre proved equal to the task when the country, for the first time, faced the onslaught of the Japanese automobile invasion. With Indian partners, Toyota, Nissan, Mazda and Mitsubishi flooded the domestic market with their sleek light commercial vehicles (LCVs). But Telco decided in 1984 to make its own LCV. Under Moolgaokar's personal supervision, Telco's designers fashioned out their indigenous product which hit the market within a year. It was possible, aver industry observers, only because of Telco's self-sufficiency as a machine tool and heavy

**Under Moolgaokar's
personal supervision,
Telco designers
fashioned their own
LCV. And, for the first
time in the world, the
Japanese automobile
juggernaut took a
beating**

AVIATION

Plane merchants woo Vayudoot

Four international companies vie with each other to bag an order for 25 aircraft

Whether it is jumbo jets of 40-seaters, the manufacturers of flying machines never fail to miss a potential market, no matter how small the airline is, or which part of the globe it is based in. It is Vayudoot's turn to enjoy the attention of international aviation companies. Caught in an unenviable situation between politicians who want



The French ATR-42: in the lead

their constituencies to enter the country's air map, and the almighty planning commission which has not missed an opportunity to castigate the third level airline for lack of profitability, Vayudoot faced an acute shortage of aircraft. After deliberating for almost 18 months—in which time it did a continuous balancing act—the government has only now, and tentatively at that, agreed to Vayudoot's acquisition programme for 25 small aircraft.

And the race is already on. Four leading international manufacturers of smaller planes suitable for servicing short-haul regional routes are competing for the Vayudoot order. Avions de Transport Regional (ATR) of France, Advanced Turbo Prop (ATP) of the UK, De Havilland of Canada and the evergreen Fokker of the Netherlands have submitted their bids to the evaluation committee which is in an advanced stage of selecting an aircraft for Vayudoot.

According to sources close to the Indian aviation industry, the ATR and Fok-

ker have a slight edge over their competitors. ATR has offered a complete financing package, including a proposal for a barter deal upto 30 per cent of the total base price and soft credit for the balance amount. And ATR-42 and ATR-72, the two models which are being pushed, drew considerable attention at the Paris air show because of their versatility. The Fokker, of course, is a tested machine in Indian skies and has served Indian Airlines at first, and then Vayudoot well over the years.

The ATR aircraft, developed over the last two years, has incorporated a number of the latest features of the all-European Airbus family of aircraft. The ATR-72, which uses carbon fibre in its outer wings has considerably reduced its weight to offer better fuel economy.

In its acquisition plan submitted to the Planning Commission, Vayudoot has

suggested the purchase of 25, 40-plus-seater aircraft for extending services to 250 stations. Currently, it touches some 102 stations. It has pointed out that without adding to its fleet it would not be possible to meet its target for covering the envisaged number of stations. But the Planning Commission has urged caution primarily because of the huge foreign exchange involvement.

Notwithstanding the Planning Commission's objections, there are justifiable grounds for expanding the Vayudoot fleet. The airline was conceived as a life-line mainly for inaccessible and remote areas of the country. But the company has grown over the last eight years and has introduced newer services to improve its bottom line. And it desperately needs more smaller aircraft to fly out of the rough weather.

Anjan Roy/New Delhi

VIDEO GAMES

Cash in a craze

If Nintendo is riding a global boom, in India it is Samurai

A cracked road with stone-crushing factories by the wayside spewing out clouds of dust, a small cluster of buildings on a sun-scorched landscape and barren hills all around. There isn't much to the Makhupura Industrial Estate, 10 km south of Ajmer, in Rajasthan. But this is where Mario takes on dragons, bikers crazily wheel round hair-pin bends, and the Kung Fu warrior lashes out at the bad guys. You could be a well-heeled kid ensconced in a plush Bombay high-rise punching remote-controlled buttons activating heroes and villains. Or a gang of urchins who have scrounged a rupee for a go at the controls in a video arcade—in a New Delhi slum. No matter. Makhupura is the home of your video dreams.

The purveyor is Samurai Electronics Pvt. Ltd, which set up shop in December 1986, in a sleek, air-conditioned building totally at variance with the rest of Makhupura. And Samurai has not had reason to look back since, for business is brisk. Consoles for the TV games, which is Samurai's main revenue earner, and games cartridges—warriors, villains, bike riders, et al—helped the company reach a turnover of Rs 4.25 crores for the year ending 31 March, 1989. The figure could more than double

to Rs 12 crores in the current financial year.

Says B. L. Malhotra, Samurai's general manager: "Our market starts with children and goes right up to older people. The initiative is taken by kids and after that, if someone older latches

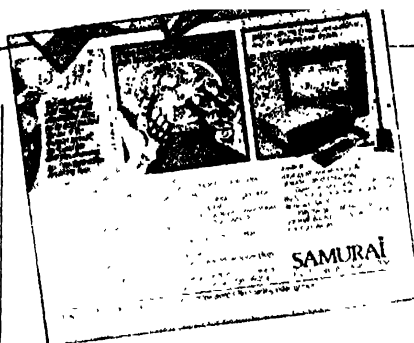


Urchins trying their hand at video games: cutting across class barriers

on to it, he is hooked. He can't resist the games." Even if it means paying fairly large sums of money: a console costs Rs 3,650 and games cartridges anywhere between Rs 300 and Rs 800 each. (The company averages two games sales with every console.)

If Samurai is riding the video boom that is sweeping the world, it is doing so on the back of the company that has single-handedly changed video game characteristics forever: Nintendo Corporation of Japan. Samurai has a tie-up with the Japanese behemoth—sales \$1.7 billion last year—for importing Nintendo kits in semi-knocked-down form, paying an import duty of 140 per cent. The console is entirely Nintendo—as is the software for the games cartridges—with the only indigenous part being the plastic casing for the cartridges. For the Indian market, Nintendo is replaced by the Samurai stamp.

What helped pull the Japanese company India's way, making Samurai the only outfit peddling games here legally, is the fact that S. K. Lal, a director on Samurai's board, is resident in Japan and has sole marketing rights for Nintendo in



The Samurai ad: booming business

the other. The difference between the slump days and the reason behind the current craze is that the games are of a wider variety—some even educational—and have better graphics, better colour, even rivetting music. Nintendo has emerged as the biggie, with 87 per cent of the international market. The present rage in Nintendo games is 'Super Mario' and 'Legend of Zelda', both worldwide and in India.



Children having a go on the consoles in a video library: Nintendo kids

Asia. He swung the deal for Samurai, coming away with marketing rights in Nepal and Bangladesh for the Indian company in the bargain. Ajmer as a location was more a sentimental choice for Samurai: Lal is from Ajmer, as are two other NRI directors, and Mahesh Toshniwal, a local businessman, is both a friend and Samurai's managing director.

The early 1980s saw a video games boom round the world, but by 1986, the market had crashed. A limited variety of games combined with rampaging pirates helped pull under established companies like Atari of the US. Even in India, the trail of out-of-business video arcades stretched from one end of the country to

**The video and TV
games business in
India has always been
illegal...But the
unkindest cut dealt by
the smugglers is that
they also bring in
Nintendo originals**

Samurai's offerings go out from Ajmer to most parts of the country, with New Delhi gobbling up 60 per cent of the company's present 2,500-a-month console output. Says Malhotra: "The Punjabi mentality is to grab anything new." Bombay picks up about 500, with Madhya Pradesh coming in as a surprising contender for high sales. For example, Indore and Gwalior account for over 100 consoles each per month, more than double the sales in Calcutta and Bangalore. Raipur in MP tops the state with 200. The demand is high enough, says Malhotra, to shift gears: Samurai plans to increase output to 4,000 consoles a month from this month and keep adding to its arsenal of 50 games by three a month. Says Malhotra: "We haven't even touched the fringe of the market." (The company has already put in an application to increase console production to 5,000 a month.) He adds, "In two years, we could be doing 10,000 a month."

Even then, Samurai would be skimming off a bare minimum of the sweepstakes. The video and TV games business in India has always been illegal, with the wares smuggled in from Kathmandu and South-East Asian electronic havens like Singapore and Taiwan. Estimates for the total market vary wildly between Rs 25 crores and Rs 40 crores a year. The smuggled variety of consoles grace almost 90 per cent of video games arcades in India—as do games cartridges—at prices often less than half of what Samurai offers. Smugglers, as Samurai is learning very quickly, don't have to cope with import duties. Many of the smuggled consoles and games are pirated Nintendo versions, with operators in Bombay and New Delhi peddling "Nintendo compatible" consoles.

But the unkindest cut dealt by the smugglers—and perhaps a supremely ironical one too—is that they also bring in Nintendo originals, especially the games. Many games released internationally by Nintendo—a current tally of 800 games to Samurai's 100—but not by the Indian company, are supplied by the illegal trade. With an absence of import duties, smuggled Nintendo originals work out cheaper than the Samurai variety. So do Atari originals.

There is nothing, admit Samurai executives, they can do about smuggling. But they are trying to reduce its spectre to keep Samurai above water. One way is a strong pitch aimed at video-arcade owners to invest in Samurai consoles and games. "By the end of twelve months," say the advertisements, "you could end up with a 500 per cent profit." This is based on the assumption that the

quality of Samurai products will see them through. Then again, a video-arcade owner, who usually forks out Rs 12,000 for every cabinet housing a console, would rather go in for the cheaper stuff and still get his returns. The only plus point is that buying Samurai products would make them immune to police raids. This segment is Samurai's current target, the exposure to urban middle-class homes—with grandson and grandfather often battling it out in front of TV screens—having already taken off.

Whatever the outcome, Samurai is here to stay. And sometimes, legitimacy can lead to satisfying—and lighter—moments. An army brigadier was down at the Samurai factory recently, and tried his hand at playing a variety of games. Says Malhotra, "We heard later that the army will introduce it (the games) in one unit as an experiment, to improve the reflexes of soldiers." He adds, "It's no joke. You have to use your hands, eyes and mind all together to play video games. It's total concentration."

Sudeep Chakravarti/Ajmer

AIR-INDIA

Reaping a bounty

Manipulations to offer Air-India's London general sales agency to Jagdish Tytler's friends come to light

It was suspicious in the extreme. Jagdish Tytler took over as minister for civil aviation in September 1985. In less than a month Air-India had fired its general sales agent (GSA) for the UK sector, Joginder Singh Sangar of Hindustan Travel Services, London. Air-India, it was said, had decided to do away with the GSA system altogether, and would use its own infrastructure to sell tickets directly.

Fair enough. Only, the airline had second thoughts in the space of a few months. In June 1986, A-I short-listed a few travel agencies and in three months' time awarded the GSA to Gimvale Limited, a little-known UK company which was a joint venture of three non-resident Indians, Lakhinder (Lakhi) Singh Paintal, Prabhajot Singh Sabharwal and Om Prakash Gulati.

A good three years later the decision has come in for scrutiny, with the then civil aviation minister, Jagdish Tytler being charged with awarding the contract to his cronies. Consider the facts.

- Paintal bought Gimvale off-the-shelf in March 1986. The company had a capital of £ 100.

- In May 1986 Paintal purchased an obscure travel agency, S.K. Travels, located in Sudbury, some 20 miles from the heart of London, for £46,000.

- On 6 October, 1986, Prabhajot Singh Sabharwal became director of Gimvale. Sabharwal's father Tejawant Singh owns Skipper Constructions which rebuilt the damaged portions of the Golden Temple after Bluestar.

- After Air-India short-listed agents and started monitoring their performance,

S.K. Travels began doing phenomenal business by undercutting fares well below the net rates charged by the airline itself, thereby incurring a loss.

- S.K. Travels got the contract over the heads of several leading travel agencies of London. (Later, though, Gimvale operated through Welcome Travels, located off Regent Street.)

Air-India, of course, dismisses all allegations of wrong doing. Says Ashok Vaish, regional director for UK, Ireland and Scandinavia: "We, like any other regional airline, need somebody to consolidate ethnic traffic, which is, buying



**Even assuming that
Tytler gave the job to
his crony, why has the
news surfaced now?**

**Apparently, it's the
same old story of
partners falling out**

tickets from thousands of bucket shops all over the country. The main business is to take financial risks in selling to such shops. So it's necessary to have GSA who will coordinate this business. The present GSA is meeting our target."

But those involved in Gimvale have their own businesses. Paintal runs a garment concern called India Import Ltd, based in Brentford outside London; Gulati owns a shop called Galaxy, selling electronic equipment, for instance. But Vaish maintains that these business interests do not clash with their work as GSA. Says he, "GSAs don't have to be travel agents. Businessmen have a lot of contacts and they can sell tickets just as well." In fact, claims the director, after Gimvale took over, the share of Air-India as far as the tourist traffic goes, shot up from 27 per cent to 41 per cent.

Paintal confirms the success story. He told SUNDAY: "I have made a success of my garment business and similarly I have made a success of this one too. From 1 January, 1987 to 31



Air-India's London GSA office: windfall for some

December, 1987, we had a turnover of £14.5 million. From 1 January 1988, to 31 December, 1988, the turnover was £15.3 million. The highest the previous GSA reached was £ 11 million". Paintal and company justify the undercutting of ticket prices, terming it commercial strategy, and claim that they are getting less incentives from Air-India than when they took over as agents. Apparently it is down to 1.5 per cent from the 5 per cent earlier.

Has Air-India lost out because of the new GSA? The airline's critics argue that it discounts its tickets too much. At present, a bucket shop in Southall will charge £450 for a ticket that should cost £580. Others say that this is inevitable: all airlines need to discount tickets to attract ethnic traffic and perhaps Air-India has to try harder because capacity on the India-London sector has shot up

from 940 seats a week in 1986 to 1,900 seats.

The airline is reluctant to badmouth Welcome Travels even though aviation gossip has it that Air-India managing director Rajan Jetley fell out with Tytler over his predilection for new GSAs. Jetley won that battle and Tytler was moved (before a GSA for North America could be appointed) but nobody at Air-India is willing to gloat. If Welcome is to be fired, then it will be done quietly and without the *tamasha* that accompanied the severance of ties with Hindustan Travel Services.

Jetley's view, say airline sources, is

that intrigue and scandal have hurt Air-India's reputation so much that it is best to keep quiet about Tytler's extraordinary fondness for GSAs.

But even assuming that Jagdish Tytler gave the job to his crony Lakhinder Singh, why has the story surfaced now, when Tytler is doing time as minister in charge of Pepsi Cola? Apparently, it's the same old story of people falling out. Going by reports, Lakhi and Gulati are both trying to buy the other out, with Sabharwal siding with the latter.

Shrabani Basu/London and Olga Tellis/Bombay

CAPITAL MARKET

Voice of the investor

Two initiatives of the Securities and Exchange Board of India are resented by the corporate sector

For far too long the stock market has been a happy hunting ground for sharks (read brokers) feeding on small fish (read the small investor). But at last, the investors have a Ralph Nader to take up their cause: S.A. Dave, the former executive director of the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI). Under his chairmanship, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), set up to act as a watchdog body for the capital market, has set for itself the role of knight errant riding out to save investors in distress. Wherever he goes, Dave keeps highlighting the message of investor protection and investor confidence.

Dave's argument is fairly straightforward: in the absence of investor confidence the country cannot have a healthy capital market and the corporate sector will find it difficult to tap the public for funds. SEBI's latest moves which are aimed at giving the ordinary investor less sleepless nights and wary of the market, relate to the prospectus which companies have to issue mandatorily when they enter the market.

In recent weeks, two of SEBI's initiatives have hit the headlines in the financial media, not only for their far-reaching implications but also because of stiff opposition from those unwilling to disturb the *status quo*. One is a model prospectus evolved by SEBI which provides for a far greater amount of disclosure of information about a company than is the current practice. The second makes it mandatory for merchant bank-

ers managing a public issue to become signatories to the prospectus, so that they, along with the directors of the company become legally liable under the Companies Act for acts of commission and omission in the prospectus.

Taken together, the two initiatives

**SEBI would like
company
prospectuses to
include information on
the future financial
scenario, disclosure
of problems that are
likely to crop up in
production, power
supply, market
demand, etc.**

S.A. Dave: knight errant



DILIP BANERJI

would mean that when a company enters the market for a capital issue, the ordinary investor will have a lot more of correct—or rather not misleading—information on the basis of which he can take a more rational decision.

The introductory paragraph to the guidelines spells out: "Improvements in disclosure standards, greater and more responsible role of market intermediaries in defining terms and prospectus of new issues, better standards of service, etc., are very essential for the healthy development of the capital market and investor protection."

Later, the guidelines go on to say: "Prospectuses are usually based on information provided to the merchant bankers by the company itself, especially general information regarding promoters, project, prospects, etc. The statutory information is drawn mostly from the memorandum and articles of association of the company. Though some effort is made by the merchant bankers to ensure that the claims made by the company are realistic, the merchant bankers rely largely on information provided by the company."

In short, SEBI has proposed that a company should not merely confine itself to making vague statements in its prospectus which give a rosy picture of the future, but come out with more specific information to enable the small investor to take a reasonable decision.

The intentions may be good, but, at the same time, the SEBI initiatives have drawn flak from the corporate sector as well as the merchant bankers. Representative organisations of the corporate sector and individual companies have strongly objected to SEBI's prescription for greater disclosure in the prospectus.

Companies are particularly concerned over the consequences of giving out details of marketing plans, future financial status, information about key personnel to be employed, etc. "It is crazy to think that any promoter would make such information public. It would be equivalent to feeding the competition with vital inputs which would be detrimental to the interests of the company. It's jam for corporate spies," says an opponent of SEBI's plans.

There may be some truth in this argument, but the broad consensus is that the prospectus in its existing form is at best a cover up exercise and at worst a whitewash job for companies making a capital issue. Though merchant bankers have fallen in line with SEBI's scheme to license them, there is a strong groundswell of protest against their being made signatories to the prospectus.

R. Vijayaraghavan/Madras

Ambani's mega media plans

After all the *tamashas* about the *Indian Post* and their 'aborted take-over', the Ambanis are quietly going ahead with their real media operation: the launch of a two-edition financial daily patterned loosely on the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.



Dhirubhai Ambani: media ambitions

There are two prongs to the Ambani strategy. The first is a determination to buy the best technology (the latest computers, satellite transmission systems). And the second is the raising of journalistic salaries to levels that surpass even those recently offered by *The Economic Times*.

Opinion in the journalistic fraternity is presently equally divided between those who worry that the Ambani jug-

ernaut might be unstoppable and those who maintain that all industrialists who enter the media will meet Vijaypat Singhania's fate.

Surviving on figureheads

So, it's more free tickets for Rahul Bajaj and Ratan Tata, after all. They have been reappointed chairmen of Indian Airlines and Air-India respectively even though their performances have been dismal. Tata fought MD Rajan Jetley, lost, and then told friends that he intended to resign—except that he never submitted a resignation. Now, Jetley runs the show himself and Ratan sticks to attending board meetings.

Rahul Bajaj, on the other hand, lobbied for a second term. It wasn't just the free tickets—the job gives him the kind of access to politicians and civil servants that he wouldn't have had otherwise. The problem is that as chairman, Bajaj took an airline that was merely bad, and turned it into a national disgrace.

The government did not want to rock the boat in an election year but at the same time could hardly ask a pair of non-performers to run the airlines. A compromise was worked out: Bajaj and Tata were reappointed but Jetley and R. Prasad (MD of Indian Airlines) have been told to ignore them.

Bigger bite for biscuit king

Biscuit king Rajan Pillai is making rapid strides. The non-resident chairman

of Britannia Industries Ltd (BIL), the country's largest biscuit manufacturer, has grabbed up the 38 per cent stake in his company held by US food and tobacco giant, Nabisco. Pillai acquired Associated Biscuits International, a British company, through which Nabisco owned a big chunk of BIL's equity. Interestingly, since the UK firm also held a 40 per cent stake in English Biscuit



Rajan Pillai: a coup

Manufacturers of Pakistan, Pillai also becomes the only Indian to have a controlling interest in a Pakistani company since Partition.

Another split?

It couldn't be more ironical. For the better part of last year and the first part of this year they were involved in an ugly and widely publicised squabble. And just when the financial institutions, in a desperate move, arm-twisted the warring camps in the Modi family to split, there is a fresh fallout. This time it is within the Gujarmal Modi branch, led by K. K. Modi, which had made things unpalatable for his uncle, K. N. Modi. The line-up is K. K. Modi and V. K. Modi in one camp, and B. K. Modi, S. K. Modi and U. K. Modi in the other. The rift came to a head when KK and VK wanted their sons—in their 20s—to be given a stake in the group's companies. But the B. K. Modi camp has opposed this move.



Good Times, Post-haste



The Times of India building in Bombay: 'floor-power'

These days, *The Indian Post* makes more news than it reports. A month ago, editor Vinod Mehta startled the media world by announcing that he was resigning because proprietor Vijaypat Singhamia wouldn't let him attack those in power. Mehta's resignation capped three weeks of intense speculation about the *Post*'s future, and his exit was supposed to be the cue for the Ambanis of Reliance Industries to buy the paper. (See SUNDAY: 18--24 June, 1989).

No such luck. Over the last few weeks, developments have been fast and furious and they've left everyone a little confused. First, the Ambanis told friends that they were not buying the paper, even as Bombay's tabloids continued to carry front-page stories predicting the exact date of the sale. Then, the great editor hunt began. Media circles reeled from a frenzy of speculation over Mehta's successor. Girilal Jain was the top seed, but when he was eliminated in the first round of gossip, more likely contenders emerged. All the usual suspects expressed horror at the thought of taking the job.

*Bombay readers may
get two versions
of The Indian Post
instead of none*

Vinod Mehta: coming in
for criticism



That out of the way, a new race took over: to predict when the *Post* would close down. Once again the tabloids named dates; once again they were wrong. (No, nobody apologised to his readers.) As this issue of SUNDAY went to press, the *Post* was still appearing, no closure had been announced, and the tabloids had forgotten their old stories.

But then, just as the great *Post* bubble seemed to be subsiding, the issue received a new fillip: Vinod Mehta and a large chunk of his staff defected to *The Times of India* to start a new daily newspaper to be called, in all probability, *The Morning Post*.

Hardly had the *Post* team reached Bori Bunder when they faced hostility from the staff of the *Times*. The *Post* had been noted for paying high salaries and the *Times* had agreed to match them, much to the annoyance of those who did not have the advantage of coming to Bori Bunder via the Ballard Estate office of the *Post*.

But there was still one more act to play. A new press baron expressed interest in the *Post*. Even after Mehta and his cohorts had moved into their new offices at the *Times*, Shreyan Shah, the

owner of Ahmedabad's *Gujarat Samachar* (four editions with a combined circulation of 4.5 lakhs) considered buying the paper.

The most interesting element of the saga, of course, was the *Times* group's decision to start a new paper. When the *Post* first ran into trouble, Pritish Nandy, publishing director of the *Times*'s English magazines put in a bid, only to have Mehta team it "bizarre". But this was no mere publicity stunt: Dileep Padgaonkar, *The Times of India*'s editor personally assured Mehta that the group was serious and the *Times*'s vice-chairman, Samir Jain, ('VCj' in Timespeak) sent word that the group wanted a second daily.

Somewhere along the way, the *Times* seems to have decided that the *Post*'s only asset was neither its title nor its dated Atex computer system, but its staff. Accordingly, it offered Mehta a job and told him to bring his best people with him. While nobody is too sure of the details, it appears that Mehta will report directly to 'VCj' and not to Padgaonkar and certainly not to Nandy. (For the record, Nandy scoffs at the suggestion that he has been sidelined and insists that the *Times* is still negotiating with Vijaypat to buy the *Post*).

But why does *The Times of India*, whose Bombay edition is the city's most successful paper, need a new daily? The answer is usually framed in terms of advertising. While the *Times* has the largest circulation, its advertising rates are also very high. Those who wish to advertise upmarket products resent having to pay these rates particularly as they only want the top end of the *Times*' readership. If the group had an upmarket daily, with a lower circulation and lower ad rates, then it could mop up all this quality advertising.

Not everybody agrees with this analysis, and anyway it provides no answer in editorial terms. As angry *Times of India* journalists were asking last week, in what sense is the main paper downmarket? Or, is upmarket simply a code-word for 'low circulation'? Further, the journalists pointed out, the stated objective of the *Times* and the *Post* is the same: to produce a quality broadsheet with a mix of news and features. So how are the two papers going to be different? "Unless of course, the group simply wants to bring out a paper that hardly anybody buys," groused one *Times* editor.

While such editorial questions admitted no easy answer, what the *Times*

journalists were upset about was the salary issue. At one level, there is no basis for parity. The *Times* is owned by Bennett Coleman, while the new paper will be owned by a company called Samrat Properties. However, because Mehta and his staff will occupy the fifth floor of the *Times* building, it is impossible for other journalists to ignore their presence.

Already, there is some resentment about the allegedly lavish furnishings afforded to the fifth floor. Says a old *Times* hand, "First, the most important floor was the third floor because the paper was produced there. Then after Nandy turned up, it became the fourth floor that mattered and everyone on the third floor hated everyone there. Now the fifth floor gets the best deal so

everyone on the third and fourth floor hates the newcomers."

This 'floor-power' may seem amusing, but at the *Times*, nobody was laughing. For two successive days, 200 staffers met for two hours to plan a protest and finally sent a memorandum to the management. Some of them feel that the Jains may back out at the last moment, and produce a new Sunday paper rather than a daily.

At the centre of all this is Vinod Mehta. Already hostile journalists are questioning his version of his row with Singhanian and alleging that he was never sent a letter asking him to spare the mighty. Others are critical of his decision to join the *Times*. Vijaypat Singhanian, in fact, sent him a legal notice



Samir Jain: It's easy when you're VC

Samir Jain personally sent word to Vinod Mehta that his group wanted a second daily. But some *Times* staffers feel that the Jains may back out at the last moment and produce a Sunday paper rather than a daily

insisting that he serve out his three-month notice period, or he would be restrained from editing another paper.

Mehta is unrepentant. The letter, he says, exists, "and I have told the Editor's Guild that I will show it if they doubt my word". As for joining the *Times*, he says, "What alternative did I have? The Birlas of *The Hindustan Times*, or Goenka? I needed a job: I have no properties to fall back on." The hostility at the *Times* he says, "is to be expected but in time there will be complete harmony".

His *Morning Post* will be out next month. If Shah buys *The Indian Post* then that too will be relaunched in a month or so. And even if he doesn't, Singhanian may keep the paper going. So finally two *Posts* may be better than none.

Olga Tellis/Bombay

DEFENCE

The unsafe skies

What are the reasons behind the high accident rate in the Indian Air Force?

When Captain Vipin Chand of the Army Aviation Corps returned to Madras after spending a year-and-a-half in troubled Jaffna, his wife, Aruna, was greatly relieved. After all, there had been hundreds of casualties among the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka. Aruna was looking forward to staying with her husband at the Tambaram air base near Madras, where Vipin was to attend a six-month flying instructor's course. Moreover, Vipin would be by her side when she delivered her second baby in August.

On the morning of 17 April, Vipin told Aruna that he would not be able to accompany her to the doctor since he had a sortie to fly. The course was being conducted on piston-engined HT-2 trainers. The aircraft which were more than two decades old, were in the process of being phased out. Only a few months back, on 12 January, an HT-2 aircraft had crashed, killing two officers of the base. After the accident, an overhaul of all the HT-2s was ordered and several of the aircraft were declared unserviceable. Sorties were difficult to come by. But on 17 April, Captain Vipin Chand managed a sortie after a ten-day break.

The captain took off at 9.30 am, with Wing Commander A.K. Dasgupta in the instructor's seat. The plane lost contact with the Tambaram Air Traffic Control (ATC) at 10.30 am. Helicopters were

sent to spot the aircraft and at 10.45, the wreckage of the ill-fated plane was sighted. The fuselage of the aircraft and mangled bodies of the two pilots were spread over a 20-metre radius near Maraimalai Nagar. Investigations revealed that the plane lost height steadily following the jamming of some critical systems of the aircraft. The pilots waved in distress to some villagers working in the fields below, crossed a small hillock and crashed into the swampy ground.

Unfortunately, the number of such fatal accidents is on the rise. This year itself, in the last six months, as many as nine IAF planes have crashed, which is a subject of great concern in the defence

The frequent crashes have taken their toll on the morale of the pilots. Today, more and more IAF pilots are seeking premature retirement and taking up jobs with civil airlines



(Above) The IAF demonstrates its skills; (Inset) the wreckage of an IAF aircraft: high accident rate

circles. Besides the two AN-2 trainers, the casualties include a Canberra and a MiG-23. The other five were all MiG-21 fighters which, though the mainstay of the IAF's combat force, have over the years become unreliable because of an alarmingly high accident rate.

But why are IAF aircraft so accident-prone? The IAF authorities are extremely tight-lipped on the issue. Though defence officials will not admit it, the accident rate of the IAF is by far the highest in the world. Defence Minister K.C. Pant had stated in Parliament that between January 1987 and March 1989 as many as 33 MiGs had crashed. The number of pilots killed in the crashes was also 33. It is generally accepted that for every 10,000 flying hours, there is a 1.5 per cent accident rate. The figure is quite high when compared to a .65 per cent accident rate for 10,000 flying hours which the Americans claim they maintain.

Experts, however, argue that the IAF

accident rate is high because the IAF is flying more. The IAF, according to one official, "easily flies three times more than any other air force around us". Added Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA): "The yardstick for accidents has to be in relation to the amount of flying done. I can safely say that the accident rate in India is not higher than any of the developing countries. And it will be at par with most developed countries."

Despite such assertions, the frequent



crashes have taken their toll on the morale of the pilots. Today, the IAF is facing an acute shortage of manpower to fly its magnificent machines. An IAF pilot said that a particular fighter squadron having 16 aircraft had only seven pilots to fly them. "Every time, say, a MiG-21 crashes, there is a loss of nearly Rs 3 crores. If the crash is a fatal one,

then the country loses Rs 5 crores more—which is what it takes to train a fighter pilot. What incentives are the pilots given to be engaged in such a high-cost war even in peace conditions?" he asked.

The high incidence of crashes, he suggested, was one of the reasons why several IAF pilots were seeking premature retirement and taking up lucrative jobs with Indian or foreign civil airlines. Only recently, when Vayudoot sent feelers to the IAF headquarters for pilots, there was a flood of over 500 applications. Vayudoot, subsequently, was told to go slow on recruiting pilots from the IAF. Said Air Marshal K. K. Singh (Retd), "Whenever there is an advertisement for 20 posts of pilots, there are at least 100 applications from the IAF. An IAF pilot is treated like an infantry soldier which, considering the constraints of the job, is a very unfair comparison." A few years ago the IAF launched a massive recruitment drive to lure more and more young men into its cockpits. The drive met with some success, but did not solve the problem of shortage of pilots completely.

For the IAF, however, more important than such desertions are the causes behind the crashes. In 1982, following a spate of accidents, the IAF made a serious attempt to conduct a post-mortem. A committee was set up by the defence ministry under Air Marshal Dennis La Fontaine. The committee examined the causes and nature of 262 IAF crashes which took place between 1977 and 1982—an average of about 45 accidents every year. Out of these accidents, the La Fontaine committee report submitted in 1983 concluded that some 40 per cent were on account of pilot error; 35 per cent were due to technical faults and 20 per cent were caused by bird hits. Air Marshal La Fontaine also included a list of 31

comprehensive recommendations as part of his report. Only half of these proposals were implemented by the government. The rest have been largely ignored.

While the IAF authorities admit that the training of Indian fighter pilots is well below the desired standard, it is the problem of bird-hits which is currently worrying the air force top brass. All over the world extensive surveys have been carried out on the subject. In 1981, the well-known ornithologist, Dr Salim Ali, had made a study of the environmental conditions which exist in India due to which the IAF planes get hit by birds. In the report submitted to the government Dr Ali concluded that there was no option but to somehow keep birds away from the airfields.

It is believed that more than 20 per cent of the IAF crashes are due to bird-hits. There have been repeated complaints from commanders of air bases but the local administration has been turning a deaf ear to the pleas of the IAF officials. For instance, despite the objection from air force authorities, a leper colony continues to flourish next to the air base in Chandigarh while a large number of tanneries have come up in the vicinity of the IAF base in Kanpur. As Jasjit Singh explained: "Among the biggest threat to IAF planes today is the vulture but we can't shoot the birds because there are municipal laws against it. They say even the scavenger birds have a role to play in the cycle of life of the people. It is very difficult for a professional force like the IAF to be fighting such odds and this often gets reflected in failures."

Apart from the bird menace, there are other high-risk areas. The first is the problem of indigenisation or "tropicalisa-

The MIG-21: unreliable?



tion" of aircraft. For instance, planes which are manufactured in Siberian conditions by the Soviets have to fly in difficult Indian conditions. No wonder it is the Soviet-made MiG-21s which have been affected most by the transfer of technology. The MiG-21s were first inducted into the IAF in 1963 and were indigenised by the public sector giant, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) within a few years. The MiG-21s today form 21 of the IAF's 35 fighter squadrons. More than 300 planes have rolled out of HAL's assembly lines, besides the MiG-23 and MiG-27 which they also manufacture. The IAF relies so heavily on the MiG-21 because Pakistan has ordered F-7 fighter aircraft from the United States. The F-7 is a modified version of the MiG-21 manufactured by the Soviet Union.



La Fontaine: suggesting remedies



An IAF engineer attends to an aircraft: poor maintenance?

For long the IAF and the HAL have been blaming each other for the frequent aircraft crashes. The IAF claims that most of the accidents involved the MiG-21s manufactured by the HAL, while the original Soviet prototypes are still flying high. The IAF authorities accuse HAL of incompetence, since it has been unable to indigenise simple equipment like cooling systems in the aircraft or equip the MiG-21s with advanced cockpit avionics which the Chinese have installed even in the MiG-19. "There is no doubt," said Air Marshal M.M. Singh (Retd), "that the quality control of HAL leaves much to be desired. The situation could be compared to the problems faced with the

indigenisation of Maruti cars. They can never compare with the original cars manufactured by the Suzuki company in Japan."

In 1985, after several MiG-21 crashes, the entire fleet was grounded. A series of meetings were held between senior HAL and IAF officials. The HAL authorities insisted that there was nothing wrong with the construction of the MiG-21s and that poor maintenance and pilot errors were behind the IAF's high accident rate.

Another important factor responsible for the crashes is that despite pleas from the pilots, the IAF has been unable to bridge the critical gap which exists between its basic trainer (Kiran) and operational trainers like the Mirage 2000. Also, the IAF is short of simulators. Some fighters like the MiG-21 and the Jaguar have their own tandem trainers but this is not enough. The result is that the IAF has been forced to fly such obsolete trainers like the AN-2 with disastrous consequences. Yet, the IAF has been dragging its feet. Long ago, it shortlisted two trainer aircraft—the Hawk 60 of the British Aerospace and the Alphajet manufactured by the French. The American F-5 is also on the IAF's short list but it is understood that the Hawk 60 is a favourite with India since it is happy with the performance of the Hunters, also manufactured by British Aerospace.

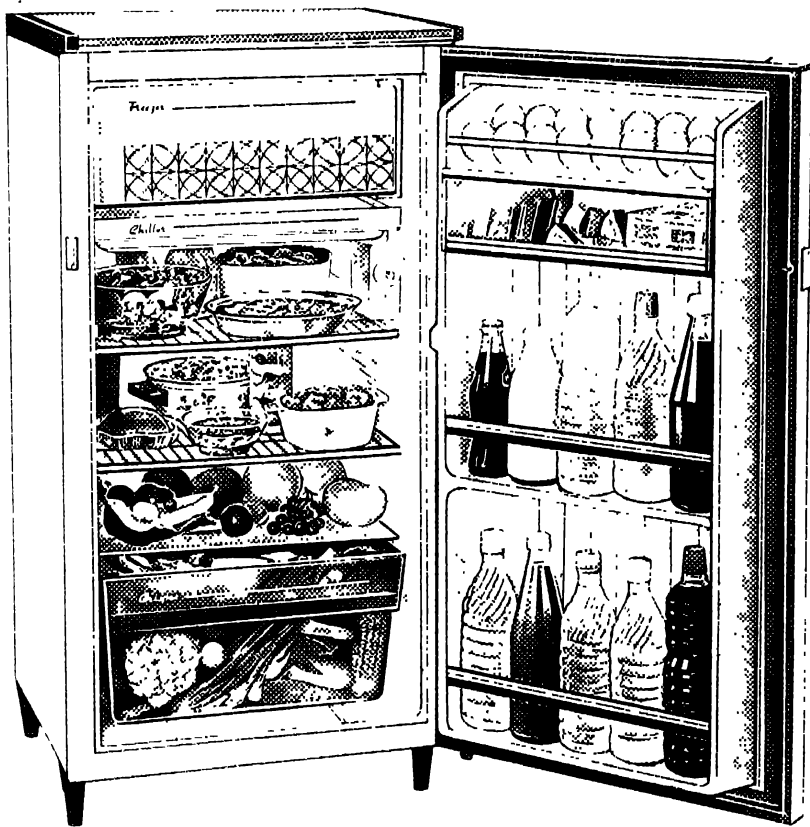
Many defence experts feel that it would be more advisable for the IAF to go in for licensed production of the MiG-21 trainer than purchasing foreign aircraft. Commented Jasjit Singh: "I do feel there is a gap in the training process and therefore a gap in performance. Such a gap tends to show up at a wrong time when you are under stress. The modern fighters are not forgiving and it might result in an accident. According to me, the purchase or indigenisation of a modern trainer should have been given top priority long ago." Another serving pilot said: "While it would not be fair to say that a lot of accidents take place because of lack of trainers but there is a tendency to rush to the foreign market rather than ask HAL to modernise existing planes."

It is perhaps a combination of all these factors which is responsible for the frequent crashes. The IAF has to maintain a large number of fighter aircraft keeping in mind the security of the country and the role it is called upon to play during wars. If a solution to the IAF's problems is not found soon, the country may have to pay a very heavy price.

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

The IAF authorities hold HAL responsible for the crashes. HAL officials, however, feel that poor maintenance of aircraft is behind the IAF's high accident rate

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A yogi and a diplomat

Dr Ramesh Paramahamsa, founder of the Indo-Sri Lanka Cultural Council, is both these things—and more

Do you know of anyone who combines an expertise in palmistry, Hindu spiritualism and herbal cure with an interest in India's foreign policy? Meet Dr Ramesh Paramahamsa, one of Sri Lanka's most consistent friends in New Delhi, a man who makes a living out of reading palms, Ayurved, *tantra* and diplomacy. Head of the New Delhi-based Indo-Sri Lanka Cultural Council, he claims Indira Gandhi pinched the slogan of "one people, one nation" from an organisation he floated in 1976. The idea of an association of Greater India countries (Bharatvarsha)—of which the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a truncated and corrupted form—was originally his.

Tall and bespectacled, the guru in white takes his study of the "ancient Indian sciences" as seriously as his efforts to maintain friendly relations between India and Sri Lanka and, eventually, unite all the countries of the subcontinent. While President Premadasa and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi exchanged angry messages over the continued presence of the Indian soldiers in Sri Lanka, Paramahamsa hosted a reception in honour of Sri Lanka's high commissioner in New Delhi, Dr Stanley Kalpage, at 22 Sardar Patel Marg, to enable the envoy to air his country's views.

Dr Paramahamsa himself is livid about the cavalier manner in which India has been treating her neighbours. Relations between India and Sri Lanka were fouled up "because our Prime Minister had no time to handle the problem directly and insisted on sending Natwar Singh to Colombo—a man who doesn't understand the problem at all", he feels. "It is because the Prime Minister allows himself to be surrounded by elements who would like to see him toppled that our relations with both Nepal and Sri Lanka are spoilt," says Paramahamsa.

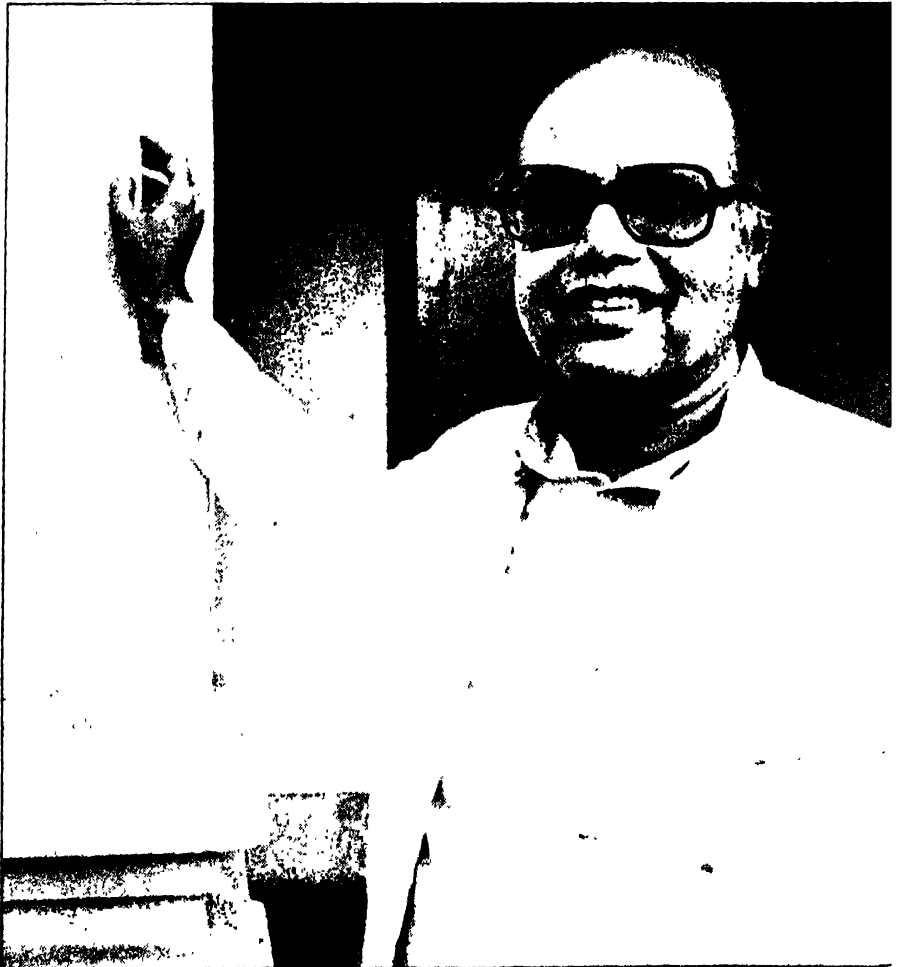
How should the problem have been tackled? "The matter should have been left in the hands of K. Mohandas, Tamil Nadu's director-general of police under MGR. He had the Tigers on the run. He

had seized all their weapons and knew their hide-outs. He could have resolved it. But before he could do anything, he was ousted. MGR was afraid of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. I knew Mohandas and MGR very well. However, my opinion was that we should not seize the weapons or raid the Tigers. What was happening in Sri Lanka was an internal matter. Why get caught in a jam there? But the Government of India wanted the weapons seized." That was the genesis of the present crisis, Paramahamsa says. India began meddling in Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis and took on the role of a

regional policeman. "What does the Government of India want us to be? A superpower? Is it mad?" he asks indignantly.

Paramahamsa has a wide range of interests and activities. In 1984, when MGR fell seriously ill, the Tamil Nadu government invited Paramahamsa to perform a *yagna* for his recovery. He was put up for three days at Madras' Saveri Hotel. "Janaki Ramachandran told me that MGR had to be saved at any cost," he recalls. "And as a result of my *pooja*, MGR lived to run Tamil Nadu for

Dr Ramesh Paramahamsa and (inset) a meeting of his Indo-Sri Lanka Cultural Council in progress: an interest in diplomacy



two more years."

The Indo-Sri Lanka Cultural Council was set up by Paramahansa in 1981 with the help of a friend, Vikram Singhe, who was charge d'affaires at the Indonesian embassy in New Delhi. Singhe had worked in Sri Lanka and knew the authorities in that country well. The two met when Singhe "came to have his palm read", Paramahansa recalls. The Sri Lankan high commissioner in Delhi then, T.B. Pannabokke, also helped a lot in the setting up of the council, which came

into being on 4 February, 1981—Sri Lanka's Independence Day. Among those who attended the inauguration was J.B. Patnaik, then Union tourism minister. According to Paramahansa, "The council is to establish friendly and cultural contacts between citizens of India and Sri Lanka on the basis of mutual friendship and cooperation."

But foreign policy is only one of his many interests. Dr Paramahansa is also the author of a book on "the tantric science of breathing", entitled *Breath Is*

but a modest man Paramahansa is definitely not. The flap of his book boasts: "By a special *yagna* (a ritual by fire) he brought Smt. Indira Gandhi back to power in 1980. Mrs Gandhi was present in the *yagna*. He saved Shri M.G. Ramachandran, chief minister of Tamil Nadu, by another *yagna* at Madras on 27 October, 1984. Similarly, by special blessing and *yagna*, he fulfilled the desire of Jenab G.M. Shah of Jammu and Kashmir and he became chief minister in quite an unexpected way."



Dr Paramahansa is livid about the cavalier manner in which India has been treating her neighbours. "Is the government mad?" he asks indignantly

Life. The text describes him as a *mahatantrayogi* (tantric scientist) who "began his search for truth from early days" and whose job is "to unravel the mysteries of our objective and subjective self". It goes on to say that he acquired his knowledge "sitting at the feet of various gurus in the Himalayas for nearly two decades". Paramahansa is the director of the Indian Institute of Tantric Studies, New Delhi and Banaras.

A great yogi and *tantric* he may be,

Paramahansa's professed passion is his concept of a 'united Bharatvarsha'. To explain what he means by the term, he reads out from a discoloured letterhead of the Bharatiya Sanskriti Bachao Mahasamiti that he fishes out of his overflowing drawers: "Long long ago Bharat Kand (subcontinent) of Jambudeep (continent) was comprised of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bharat (India), Nepal (Nawal Desh), Sonar Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Kampuchea, Bhutan and Burma. There existed incredibly friendly cultural and emotional relations among the people of Bharatvarsha." Paramahansa adds: "You won't believe it but the Kampuchians were after me to get themselves included, so I put their name in."

Paramahansa set up the Bharatiya Sanskriti Bachao Mahasamiti in 1976. The first major agitation was against the mixing of beef tallow in vegetable oil in 1982. "S. Roychoudhury, who was secretary to the then finance minister, Pranab Mukherjee, told me that vegetable oil was being adulterated with beef tallow," Paramahansa recalls. That made him take to the streets. Another issue that his organisation agitated about was India's adherence to the Shaka calendar. "This is a Buddhist calendar, not a Hindu one" he complains.

Paramahansa is annoyed by the many Buddhist symbols India has adopted, "thanks to Jawaharlal Nehru's fascination with that religion". The Ashoka Chakra, the Ashoka Stambha and the Shaka calendar, he complains, are all symbols of a religion "that is not ours". India is a Hindu country, he argues. "The real secular India is the undivided India of which both Pakistan and Bangladesh were an integral part. Why should we pretend to be secular when these countries are not with us any more?"

But Paramahansa aspires for an even larger country—Bharatvarsha—which could swallow up almost the whole of south Asia. Why blame Rajiv Gandhi for being an expansionist and a meddler in other countries' internal affairs?

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi

PRIMING THE MINISTER

She is not your average Pakistani politician. Kevin Starr, her tutor at Harvard, remembers a Benazir Bhutto the world has never seen

In the fall of 1969 a tall and graceful 16-year-old from Pakistan with gazelle eyes and ferocious intelligence began her studies at Radcliffe College, Harvard University. A year later, a seasoned sophomore of 17, she moved from the freshman dorm at the Radcliffe Quad to Eliot House on the Charles River. There she spent the following three years, graduating in 1973 with a cum laude degree in government. Benazir Bhutto, who will be 36 this year, now serves as Prime Minister of Pakistan. Her friends at Eliot House used to call her Pinkie. No one calls her Pinkie any more.

Friends and acquaintances from Benazir Bhutto's Harvard days must keep two disjunctive images in mind. On the one hand, there is Pinkie, the laughing, exuberant member of a half-dozen overlapping undergraduate circles. Pinkie—playing squash in sweatpants so as to observe Islamic modesty. Pinkie—hanging out with soccer, basketball and football players, a jock groupie with a preference for good old boys from the South. Pinkie—bursting into the Eliot House dining-room on a snowy weekday evening with nothing Islamic about her parka and jeans. Pinkie—playing Joan Baez records in her room or listening for the umpteenth time to Carly Simon singing *You are so vain*. Pinkie—organising a party around a television showing of Dr Seuss' *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. Pinkie—ringing my doorbell at the senior tutor's suite, K-11, and asking to take my daughter, Marian, then a precocious eight, to a basketball game.

And now there is Her Excellency the Prime Minister. Pinkie has become Benazir: formal, reserved, stately and aristocratic, her handsome face pharaonic in its precision and impassivity. She returned to Pakistan after four years at Harvard and four years at Oxford only to have her father the Prime Minister deposed in a coup and two years later hanged after a brutal imprisonment. She spent most of the following



Pinkie: the ebullient college coed

years in jail or under house arrest. In August of 1985, she escorted the body of her brother, Shah Nawaz, back to Pakistan after he had been poisoned at his home in Cannes in the south of France, a second Bhutto victim, she believes, of the wrath of the reactionary elements who deposed and hanged her father. An estimated 50,000 people crowded the funeral procession. General Zia-ul Haq threw her back in jail, and in November she left the country. When she returned again in April 1986, she was greeted by huge crowds at the Lahore airport. By December 1988 she was Prime Minister of Pakistan—the first real job she has ever held in her life.

She came to Harvard as the pampered daughter of immense privilege. Her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, inherited vast estates but came to power as a reforming socialist. She was educated at home by private tutors and at an exclusive Roman Catholic boarding school in the foothills of the Himalayas. Her father had attended Oxford and Berkeley and wanted the same Anglo-American education for his daughter. So she came to Radcliffe at 16, a year or two younger than most of her class.

At first, the demands of undergraduate life, even at privileged Radcliffe, baffled and appalled her. Writer Anne Fadiman, who was a freshman along with Bhutto, later remembered how Pinkie had never, until coming to Radcliffe, picked up a ringing telephone and answered it for herself. She was revolted by the coed lavatories that were the rage among aggressively nonsexist undergraduates. She was shocked when students smoked or flung their legs nonchalantly across the desk during tutorials.

By the time she transferred to Eliot House as part of a 36-woman contingent that transformed it into a coed institution, she had already become acculturated. Throughout the long governance of its master, John Finley, a professor of classics, Eliot House had cultivated an aristocratic ambience. Orderly, preppy-jock, Anglophilic and enamoured of lineage, Eliot House under Finley defined itself as being simultaneously for and against the larger American possibilities. Every year hordes of Eliot House graduates would sail for Oxford or Cambridge to complete their educations.

By 1970, when Pinkie Bhutto arrived, all this was changing, along with everything else at Harvard. A new master, Alan Heimert, Powell Cabot Professor of American Literature, was seeking to democratise Eliot House without destroying its fundamental gestalt. Heimert's efforts paralleled larger trans-

formations throughout Harvard and Radcliffe: the Kennedy era had boosted the colleges into the national consciousness as a representatively American (as opposed to a purely establishment) institution. In those years, Harvard was filling up with its usual amalgam of American and foreign upper classes, jocks and superbrains. But waves of public school students and country boys and girls ("boondockers," in admissions committee code) and minority students (including at least one paroled felon) were flocking in as well.

"On the one hand, Eliot House emanated a mood of seriousness and orthodoxy," says Anthea Waleson, who now teaches at Stanford. "On the other hand, it was the radical early Seventies, the Vietnam period. There were a number of major riots at Harvard while we were

there. I remember looking out of my window one afternoon and seeing the police clearing the street."

Bhutto threw herself enthusiastically into this bubbling mixture of backgrounds and social change, cultivating a democratic style and never putting on airs. "She was always in motion," Elsie Wilson Thompson recalls, "always animated, always at a high energy level. She was ever the participant, never the passenger."

Writer Laurence Bergreen says Bhutto always seemed to enter the Eliot House dining-room in the centre of a bustling group. One time, Bergreen came into the dining hall on his own. Pinkie was seated, as usual, at the centre of a lively circle. Shoving her chair to one side, she bellowed across the stately dining-room: "Larry, Larry,



After her election as Prime Minister: a triumphant Benazir

Surprisingly, the Islamic young woman who refused to wear dresses or to dance had a large number of men friends. She was a jock groupie with a preference for good ol' boys from the South

come sit by meeee!"

Bhutto asked a hundred questions about the United States. She became adept at mimicking American accents. One spring break she accompanied a group of her Southern friends to Mississippi, and she became fascinated by the regional differences in American culture. After years pent up in a Catholic boarding school, the freedom of Harvard was an exhilaration. Just before she came to power as Prime Minister, she had a long talk with an assistant secretary of state about her attitudes toward the United States. She asked him to go back and tell his people at the State Department that she was not anti-American. She understood American society, including its contradictions, and she understood what did or did not play in American politics.

She had, in fact, a kind of residual American self from her Harvard years with which she could relate to the United States.

Interestingly enough, the women who first voluntarily chose to come to Eliot House, the very symbol of the old order, were by and large a conservative group. Bhutto included. In a way, the Eliot House women of the early Seventies were living after, but not in, the revolution. Most of them have gone on to do the kinds of things Radcliffe women were supposed to go on to do. Thompson, for example, went to law school at University of Virginia and is in practice with her husband in Charlottesville. Tina Rathborne became a filmmaker: her best-known effort is *Zelly And Me*. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, a Winthrop House undergraduate who married an Eliot House tutor, became an attorney and ran for election to Congress from Maryland. Benazir Bhutto became Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Twenty years later, the Prime Minister's Eliot House contemporaries recall the diversity of her friendships. "She hung out with athletes and intellectuals, especially those aware of Third World countries and problems," recalls Don Ganem, an associate professor of medicine at the University of California in San Francisco. "She also had smart-set social friends and friends with deep political connections, such as Kathleen Kennedy, RFK's daughter, and Jamie and Peter Galbraith, whose father, John Kenneth Galbraith, the Harvard professor of economics, had been ambassador to India."

Surprisingly, this Islamic young woman, who refused to wear dresses or to dance and who kept Islamic dietary laws in the dining-room, had a large number of men friends, including the Lebanese-American Ganem, then a pre-med student from Massachusetts (Pinkie liked the fact that his parents spoke Arabic); Frank Currie, now a high-tech lawyer in Palo Alto, whom she called Currie-poo; and a half-dozen hockey, basketball and soccer players. She also took up with Bergreen and such other burgeoning intellectuals as James Snyder,



(Above) With mother, Nusrat: Benazir never forgot her background; (below) with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto: her father's daughter in every way



er, now deputy director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City; the Galbraith brothers; Hamilton Fish, son and grandson of the congressmen and himself a congressional candidate; and Bruce Johnson, a Seattle attorney.

"She mingled easily with both men and women," remembers Johnson. "We took it for granted at the time. That was the mood of the early Seventies, but given her background and religion, it was really extraordinary."

In early January of this year, Ganem happened to catch Benazir Bhutto on the *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*, which gave her 15 minutes, an eternity in television time. The chiselled responses coming from the reserved and decorous Prime Minister contrasted dramatically in his mind with the memory of Pinkie Bhutto, Harvard debater *par excellence*.

"At Harvard," Currie remembers, "Pinkie Bhutto didn't dance. She debated."

Something distinct—something fierce, intellectual, imperious—came into Pinkie Bhutto in debate. The early Seventies provided topics enough. Take the Pakistan civil war, for example, which resulted in the loss of East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh, an event that first brought her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, to power as President in 1971 and later as Prime Minister after a new Constitution was adopted in 1973. Needless to say, everybody at Harvard was on the side of Bangladesh. Literally alone, Bhutto bucked this tide. She referred to Bangladesh as Occupied East Pakistan, even after the outcome of the civil war was irrevocable, and she defended Richard Nixon because he had declared a "tilt toward Pakistan" during the conflict. Defending Nixon to Harvard/Radcliffe undergraduates in the Vietnam era was akin to defending Karl Marx at the American Heritage Institute, but Pinkie Bhutto stood her ground.

"She had an American college kid side," remembers Currie, "but the minute a political debate flared up, especially if it involved Pakistan, she dropped that demeanour and became almost

a new person. I once saw her take on a Harvard professor in open debate about Bangladesh. Not only that, the audience was against her as well. She was about 19 at the time. She held her own."

Even as the testimony builds from her contemporaries regarding Pinkie the ebullient college coed, another current emerges: symptoms and traits suggestive of a deeper identity that proved to be her destiny. No matter how much fun she was having, Pinkie was also Benazir, daughter of the Prime Minister, member of one of the two dozen families that owned and governed Pakistan. Ganem remembers going with Pinkie to a dinner of the Boston-area Pakistan Students Association given at the home of MIT Professor and Mrs. Hamid ud-Din. "The minute Pinkie stepped into her Pakistani dress," Ganem remembers, "she became reserved, almost regal. At the dinner, I noticed the deference with which she was treated by the hosts and the other Pakistani students. She accepted it easily. I knew right then that she wouldn't be Pinkie forever."

Eliot House friends Elizabeth Steinhardt Duffett and Barbara Nemetz came to the same conclusion in the summer of 1972, when they spent six weeks in Pakistan as Bhutto's guests. "I remember getting off the plane in a dazed state after the 36-hour trip," Duffett recalls. "I expected to get my luggage and catch a cab into Karachi like everyone else. But there was Pinkie waiting on the tarmac, standing next to a Rolls-Royce. She was dressed in proper Muslim attire but was wearing designer sunglasses. Standing next to her was a turbaned servant, looking like something out of Rudyard Kipling. 'You're late! You're late!' Pinkie called to us, and I remember being struck by the juxtaposition of her American undergraduate personality and the pomp and circumstance that surrounded her."

Duffett and Nemetz spent the next six weeks moving by limousine and helicopter from house to house, each more sumptuous than the last. They visited the Khyber Pass, which is no longer open to foreigners. They flew with Pinkie and her father up to the Himalayan princely state of Hunza, where the Aga Khan maintains a palace. With a certain American naiveté, they asked how Pinkie and her father, living in such circumstances, could consider themselves socialists. The question caused a slight strain in the relationship. Duffett and Nemetz could not fully integrate the Eliot House Pinkie with the feudal princess they encountered.

In later years it made a little more sense. "Pinkie," Duffett says, "always



(Above) Pinkie : she mingled easily with both men and women; (below) Gen. Zia: he changed her life

had a special way of combining her heritage and the West. She could be at once socialist and feudalistic. In her dress, she had a way of blending Islamic attire with western chic. Islam calls for her to wear pants, for example, so she wears ultratapered slacks and an oversized sweater. Custom calls for her to drape her head in a long scarf, but it's an Hermès."

When Prime Minister Bhutto went to India to meet with Indira Gandhi, he took his daughter with him as aide and escort. When he went to China, he did likewise. "We knew she was different," remembers Johnson, "when she came back to Eliot House after having actually met and talked to Chairman Mao. You

No matter how much fun she was having, Pinkie was also Benazir, daughter of the Prime Minister, member of one of the two dozen families that owned and governed Pakistan





Benazir with husband, Asif Ali Zardari: "I wouldn't be an easy person to marry"

can't imagine what power Mao had as an icon to undergraduates of that era. This was before even Nixon went to China." Pinkie accompanied her father to the Nixon White House as well.

The time Pinkie spent at the home of John Kenneth Galbraith also represented a gesture on her part toward deeper realities. As ambassador to India, Galbraith had acquired a vast and sympathetic knowledge of the subcontinent. "Galbraith hovered over her like a father," remembers Currie. "At the Galbraith house, she threw aside her girlish demeanor and became—although I did not have the phrase for it then—the young world leader, her father's daughter in every way. After General Zia had overthrown Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and had him condemned to death, the Galbraiths organised a clemency drive in the United States. Its failure was a blow to the entire Galbraith family."

The details of Zulfikar Bhutto's last days are ghastly. He was humiliated and

physically abused and denied proper medical attention. He deteriorated physically and psychologically as the end approached. Benazir saw him through these final, horrible days. Toward the

"Pinkie always had a special way of combining her heritage and the West. She could be at once socialist and feudalistic," says an old friend



Benazir with Rajiv Gandhi: projecting her presence

end, he would allow only her to see him in his deteriorated state. After his execution, she was refused permission to attend the funeral.

Long before that, however, the Prime Minister came to Harvard. Silver-haired and supersuave, Oxbridge elegant in his gray pinstripe Savile Row suit, he swept into the Eliot House courtyard like a demigod whom no one could touch, much less imprison and hang. Pinkie basked in her glory as she introduced him to friends. That scene remains a *tableau vivant* of their entire relationship. Within little more than a decade he and her brother would be dead, and she would be approaching the edges of physical and emotional exhaustion after years of imprisonment, harassment and house arrest.

Oxford, meanwhile, provided the setting for an important sea change. The Americanised Pinkie became the Anglicised Benazir, student of philosophy, politics and economics at Lady Margaret Hall. At Harvard she ran with a mixed bag of jocks, intellectuals, preppies and the upwardly mobile; at Oxford she ran with her own social class, whipping around in her yellow MG convertible. Oxford spoke to Benazir's sense of the Raj, with herself as protagonist, albeit as a reforming socialist. It also offered a better forum for debate—the Oxford Union—than did the Eliot House dining-room.

She remained at Oxford for a fourth year, taking a course in diplomacy after finishing her second Bachelor's degree, in order to campaign for the presidency of the Oxford Union, an almost impossible task for a non-UK female, no matter how prominent. She campaigned so ferociously the contest was challenged,



but she prevailed. Prior to her election as Prime Minister, the presidency of the Oxford Union had been her only elective office.

In the fall of 1986, having made a triumphal if precarious return to her homeland, Bhutto visited the United States for a speaking tour. When she went to San Francisco to address the World Affairs Council, she had a reunion with some Eliot House friends from the Bay Area. She sat around the table with Ganem, Duffett and Currie eating vegetarian pizza. Bhutto talked about her imprisonment and the damage it had done to her health. She talked about the loneliness of being under house arrest,

with only a cook and a houseboy on the premises.

"You could have talked to them," Duffett remarked.

"Nonsense!" Bhutto replied. "If I did that, they would think I was really losing my grip."

Ganem teased her about still being single. He said he'd fix her up with one of the Pakistani MDs he knew. "I wouldn't be an easy person to marry," Bhutto answered.

When the time finally came for Bhutto to marry a wealthy, polo-playing Sindhi businessman, Asif Ali Zardari, Fadiman went to Pakistan and covered the cere-

The demands of undergraduate life baffled and appalled Benazir. Before coming to Radcliffe, she had never picked up a ringing telephone and answered it for herself

Her Excellency the Prime Minister



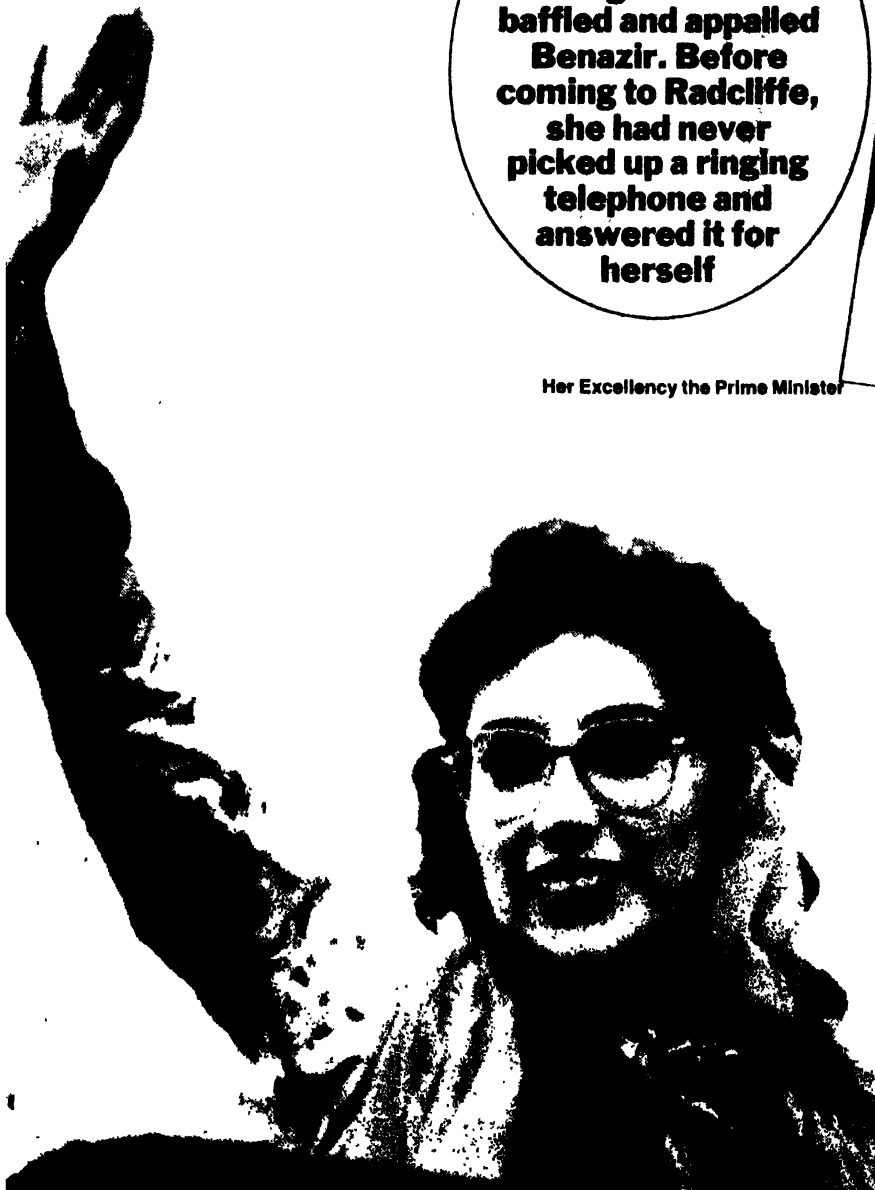
Benazir Bhutto: "she has suffered and endured"

mony for *Life* magazine. She was appropriately impressed by its dignity and splendour.

Benazir Bhutto's Harvard years should not be overinterpreted. Long before she showed up at Cambridge, she had been deeply formed by the dynamics of history, class and political position. Classmate Snyder saw clues of this even in those early Eliot House years. "She was always a self-possessed person," he remembers, "giving commands to her peers but in a light-hearted way. Even then she had a wonderful ability to project her presence, and that is what I think she is now doing so well."

"She has suffered and endured," says Thompson. "She has produced her son and won back the role that cost her father his life. Now I hope that she can do the rest as well. I hope she can do it all."

The author, a writer who lives in San Francisco, was Senior Tutor at Harvard's Eliot House from 1970 to 1973.



No-ball, after all

The Board of Control for Cricket in India seems keen to let off the errant cricketers who played in the United States and Canada

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) seems determined not to punish the cricketers who had flouted its directive to return to India immediately after the Indian tour of the West Indies. At its second meeting in three months, the disciplinary committee constituted by the board decided to give the errant cricketers another opportunity of getting away unscathed.

Despite seven telex messages sent by the board to the manager of the Indian team in the West Indies—each one of them forbidding the cricketers to play any exhibition matches anywhere, but allowing them to visit friends and relatives in the United States or elsewhere—they went ahead with their plans and played four exhibition matches in the United States and Canada. They were paid handsomely for these appearances.

The working committee of the board discussed the issue and decided that some form of punishment should be meted out to the players. Members felt that if strong action was not taken, the players would soon start functioning as a parallel association. But board president Biswanath Dutt took a soft line and said the players had a right to be heard. Accordingly, a disciplinary committee was formed.

At its first meeting which was held last month, this committee decided to issue show-cause notices to the players, asking them why they should not be punished. The players consulted their lawyers, met each other and finally decided to send similarly-worded replies to the board. Of the fifteen cricketers served with the notice, 13 replied.

When the board committee met for the second time at the Eden Gardens in Calcutta, they spent almost three hours discussing the issue. The only positive decision taken at that meeting was the exoneration of W. V. Raman. This player had stated in his reply that he had not played any exhibition matches any-

where and had gone on to England. Satisfied with his reply, the committee decided to strike his name off the list of "rebels".

Two players, Chetan Sharma and Arshad Ayub, sent letters saying that they had heard about the show-cause notice but had not received the letters since they were in England, playing the Lancashire league. The board decided to send them the notice afresh.

More important, however, was the consideration of the other players' replies. Not one of them stated that he was sorry he had made the trip. All that they promised was that they wouldn't do such a thing in future. While the majority of the board members felt this was way below their expectation from the cricke-

ters, president B. N. Dutt took the softest line possible. He felt that the cricketers should be given another opportunity to explain their stand. So, the committee scheduled yet another meeting, this time at the Wankhede Stadium in Bombay, on 5 and 6 August. They have started issuing letters to all the players asking them to be present in person at that meeting, "if they so desire".

This means that the players could just walk up to the members of the committee, say they were sorry and get away with the most indisciplined behaviour one could imagine. If the board decided to give them a reprieve, it could well mean the end of organised cricket in India.

But it will not be very easy for the BCCI to let the players get away so easily. What the players had done could cause considerable embarrassment to the board president himself. The players had played for profit abroad and allegedly not declared the amount while returning to India.

Under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, this is a punishable offence. If proceedings are launched against the cricketers, the board president would automatically be involved, because he heads the organisation which arranged the trip abroad. Along with the "offenders", he, too, could

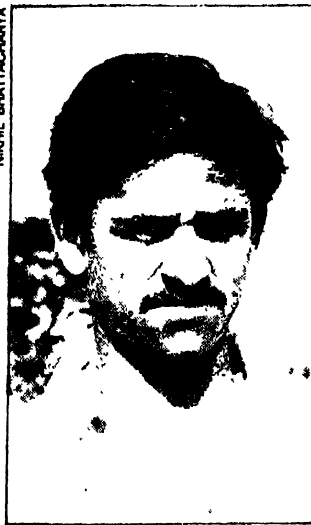
be questioned about the undeclared income of the cricketers.

If the board does not take action against the cricketers, it would mean the organisation itself was involved in the deal which benefited them. At the moment, BCCI officials don't know how much the players earned from this jaunt to North America, so they will not be in a position to place the details before any government agency.

One important factor is the admission by the players themselves that at least some of them had signed contracts with the organisers of the exhibition



Ajay Sharma



Sanjeev Sharma

Ajay and Sanjeev Sharma have alleged that they were conned into taking part in the exhibition matches and were paid much less than what they were promised

matches even before they signed the board's contract. The BCCI has a standard contract which players have to sign before being eligible to play for the country. Before the West Indies tour, all of them had signed the contract.

There are two clauses in the contract which state that the players cannot play any unauthorised cricket anywhere outside the tour planned for them. They could take part in matches arranged by others only if the board president allowed them to do so. In this case, the president had actually forbidden them to play. Players are also enjoined not to enter into any contract with others.

By signing the contract with the promoters of the exhibition matches, the players have opened themselves to penal action. It is established in law that if a person signs two conflicting contracts, the second is void. In this case, the principal contract was with the board, because the players are all affiliated to it. Moreover, they were on course to play representative cricket with players of another official board. The exhibition matches were not organised by the official cricket boards of either the United States or Canada. Both these are members—albeit only associate—of the International Cricket Conference, which controls official cricket worldwide.

It will be embarrassing for the BCCI president if these two ICC members raise the question of the Indian players' activity in their territory. It is in the rules that players cannot take part in matches anywhere without the express sanction of the countries concerned.

But realisation seems to have finally dawned on some of the players. A few of the junior players have reportedly decided to play it safe. They are planning to write to the board asking forgiveness and saying sorry. Among these are Ajay and Sanjeev Sharma. They have alleged that they were conned into taking part in the exhibition matches and were paid much less than what they were promised. They have also stated that they were sorry for going on the unauthorised tour. The youngster from Tamil Nadu, Venkataramana, has also re-



Chetan Sharma: getting away?

portedly written a second letter expressing regret and promising not to flout board directives in future.

The senior cricketers have not yet decided on their next course of action. They will, no doubt, consult their lawyers again. But the indications are that they will verbally express regret, so that the board could take a soft line. It is alleged that they have already started the

It will not be very easy for BCCI to let the players get away so easily. What the players had done could cause considerable embarrassment to the board president, B.N. Dutt, himself

process of trying to talk to various members of the disciplinary committee, including Madhav Mantri, I.S. Bindra and K.M. Rungta (apart from Kanmadikar, who was not present at the Calcutta meeting) to try and make them tone down the various disciplinary measures discussed by them.

But it is not going to be a very easy task. While it is felt that both Kanmadikar and Mantri want to soft-pedal the issue, the other members are not too keen to let the players off the hook. The BCCI has reportedly managed to get a copy of the contract signed by the cricketers with the organisers of the exhibition matches. So there is no way the players can deny having earned money through these matches.

"We realise the board wouldn't exist without the players. We are also not bent on revenge. But this issue has gone too far. It's now a question of a one-time stake. We have to take a decision which will serve as a lesson to all cricketers in future." This is the line the majority of the members have taken.

It is understood that if the players apologise unconditionally, they will be let off

with a fine. If they don't, they will be both suspended and fined. But the question is: how much will the players be fined? Some board members feel that the amount of fine should be equal to the amount the players earned through these "illegal" matches.

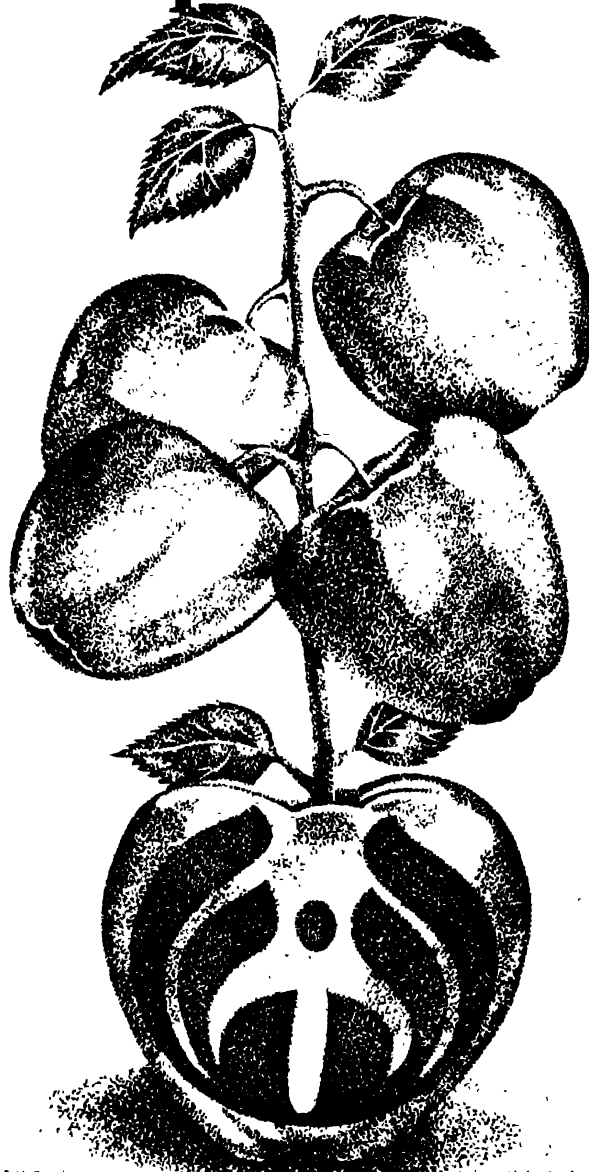
Ultimately, however, the fine may be just about Rs 25,000. According to insiders, the promoters of the exhibition matches have already agreed to provide this "fine" money. So where does that leave the board? As it is, the amount is measly compared to the offence of knowingly flouting rules. And, if even this is provided by the tour sponsors, the board would really be made to look silly.

Unless the BCCI takes a strong stand, its own existence will be in peril. There are any number of Kerry Packers on the fringes of cricket. They are waiting to take their pickings in such "virgin" cricket lands as the United States and Canada.

Arijit Sen/Calcutta

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Checking pollution

Pollution never ceases to be a problem. And things could not be worse for those who are allergic to dust—particularly those suffering from diseases like asthma, sinusitis, or migraine. Now, two researchers from Calcutta's Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics have come up with a device that creates a dust-free atmosphere—much to the relief of all.



The two scientists, P.K. Bose and R.K. Paul, have assembled indigenously an electronic device called Astrakon 2000, which freshens the air and cleans it of circulating pollutants like all kinds of smoke and airborne bacteria before they reach the lungs. The device comes as a blessing to all—particularly patients with respiratory problems.

Peculiar request

It may be a tall order, but this is the era of the Pan-chayati Raj, and, as far as rural development is concerned, anything is possible. The *sarpanch* of Pochina village, in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district, has come up with a peculiar request to the state government: that his hamlet be provided with a helicopter service.

A few years ago, the residents of Pochina had the pri-



vilage of playing host to Rajiv Gandhi during his visit to the area. The villagers had then requested the PM that their village be provided with a road. Since the plea was made to the highest authority in the land, they were hopeful that their wish would be fulfilled, sparing them the arduous task of traversing the inhospitable desert to reach the district headquarters every day—even for the smallest errand. But that was not to be.

Undaunted, the *sarpanch* sent a representation to the chief minister, pleading that the government provide them with a helicopter service at least, since it appeared to be unable to

build the road. This, they felt, would alleviate their problems. "As the village already has a helipad, you should not have any difficulty in meeting at least this demand," the petition went.

We wait and see—if remote Pochina's unusual request is met.

Living dangerously

He loves living dangerously and doing a lot of crazy things. Coimbatore resident N. Parthasarathy is more than a foundry supervisor—he is also a self-styled king of snakes and scorpions. He claims to have been bitten 17 lakh times by scorpions and snakes, including some of the most



THIS INDIA

● **HYDERABAD:** Running not only keeps people fit, it can also fetch them jobs. Proving this point is the public sector. Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), Kothagudem, which has introduced the "run for your job" selection procedure. It was five years ago that the company embarked upon this novel method of selecting unskilled employees for its mining operations. The endurance test challenges the candidate to run five km and secure his job. It also eliminates scope for malpractice and has proved to be highly effective, managing director E. Govindarajan claimed—*Newstime* (Syed Moin Munawar, Hyderabad)

● **KARWAR:** About 1000 children from a primary school at Mallapur village in Karwar taluka took out a procession to the *zilla parishad* office recently, demanding that teachers be posted in their school. The children said that there was only one teacher in their school which had 280 students in classes ranging from the first to the seventh standard. Since one teacher could not handle all the classes, the children had stopped going to school—*The Times of India* (D.N. Rajan, Kalwa)

PRIZE RS 100 FOR THE ENTRY GIVEN FIRST

poisonous vipers. The truth is that Parthasarathy likes living with such creatures, and even allows them to crawl all over him.

But the story does not end with his ophidian fantasies. He has walked backwards for 47 hours non-stop, covering a distance of 430 km. He has side-stepped for two-and-a-half hours. He did not blink his eyes for 33 hours and 10 minutes; smoked 50 cigars in 12 minutes, and consumed 81 bananas in 30 minutes and, more recently, even swallowed 50 gms of *chilli* powder!

Weird vandalism

Bidar district in northern Karnataka has been witnessing a weird kind of vandalism. Miscreants have been going about removing spectacles from the statues of public figures. Recently, spectacles from a statue of Dr Ambedkar in the town were stolen and the same miscreants appeared to be behind the theft of glasses from a Mahatma Gandhi bust at Chittaguppa, near Bidar. A



huge crowd had assembled to protest against the "insult". The Ambedkar statue incident even sparked off a violent *bandh*. The local authorities have tried to pacify the irate crowds by saying that the culprits will be nabbed but the Dalits of Bidar are now demanding a bronze statue with permanent metal spectacles moulded on it.

SUNDAY WEEK

BEGINNING 16 JULY 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

Those in service may get a promotion. Elders and relatives may contribute to your share of happiness. This might prove to be a lucky week for you. You may expect a windfall. Do not hesitate to go on a journey, for this might prove helpful. Do not neglect your business, at this juncture it needs your attention.

Good dates: 16, 18 and 22

Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 6

Favourable direction: South-west



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

Of late you have not been very confident of yourself. But there is no need to worry. Have patience and try to deal with situations according to their merit. Take the help and advice of old friends and acquaintances. In all other matters this is a very favourable week, particularly love and marriage. A letter will bring you good news.

Good dates: 17, 19 and 20

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 8

Favourable direction: West



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

This is a week when you must pay attention to minor details, especially on the domestic front. Small, unhappy incidents are likely to trouble you but do not let this upset you. The bad patch will soon be over. On the professional front, you are advised to exercise tact and patience. Lovers, this week is not a good time for affairs of the heart.

Good dates: 18, 20 and 22

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6

Favourable direction: North



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

This is not a very good week for those in service. You might have to face a lot of opposition from those in authority. For others, especially creative artists, this week will be a very favourable one since you will gain recognition and respect from all people. But do not be complacent, you may receive certain news which may cause problems for you.

Good dates: 17, 20 and 21

Lucky numbers: 1, 6 and 7

Favourable direction: North-west



LEO (21 July—20 August)

You are extremely fortunate this week, for your qualities which have gone unnoticed so far will be appreciated by the people around you. You will be rewarded with a promotion. Letters will bring in good news. Do not neglect the health of your family members. A happy week for those romantically inclined.

Good dates: 19, 20 and 22

Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: East



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

Your health might trouble you this week. But do not worry. Make use of the opportunities that come your way. Those of you who are unemployed may get jobs. Businessmen, be on your guard; a single mistake will mean a financial loss. Take care to exercise caution and tact in everything you do.

Good dates: 20, 21 and 22

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: North-east



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

Those of you who are involved in intellectual pursuits will be crowned with success. Your business affairs will make a steady progress. But get ready to face opposition from your partners. In spite of disappointments, this is going to be a happy week. Exercise caution while dealing with members of the opposite sex.

Good dates: 18, 21 and 22

Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: West



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

Not a good week for you. Your personal life will be beset with problems. You might not be able to concentrate on your work. Moreover, you may suffer irreparable damages financially because of a lawsuit. Have enough confidence, you will have to shoulder responsibilities. However, this is the time to plunge into new ventures.

Good dates: 17, 19 and 21

Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: South



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

A good week for those connected with intellectual pursuits. However hard your enemies might try, you will be able to successfully thwart their evil designs if you devote yourself wholeheartedly to your career. Be diligent and concentrate on your work for this will be rewarding.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 19

Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 9

Favourable direction: North



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

Cheer up, for a good week lies in store for you. Steady progress is forecast on all fronts. Do not worry about your health for it will show signs of improvement. Letters will bring you good news. A word of caution: refrain from gambling and speculation. Also, seek advice from elders before taking an important decision.

Good dates: 18, 19 and 20

Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 6

Favourable direction: East



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

If you are in government service you will be rewarded with a promotion. Those not so lucky may get a transfer. Those of you who are romantically inclined, may fall in love. But take care to guard yourself against evil influences. Exercise utmost caution in speech and letters: a slip might prove harmful. You may have to go out of town.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 21

Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5

Favourable direction: East



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

A very good week for courtship; some of you may even get married in the near future. Those in business, take care for you might suffer a minor setback. However, do not be disheartened, for on the whole you will make steady progress on all fronts. New friends will contribute to your share of happiness. Take care of your health.

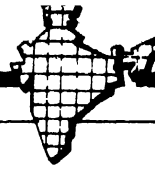
Good dates: 16, 20 and 21

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9

Favourable direction: West

Star Partners: Virgo—Gemini

The Virgo woman is an intelligent and persevering woman. The Gemini man, on the other hand, is very innovative and is always ready to take on challenging assignments. The two of them, however, may have differences of opinion from time to time, but these can, with a little bit of patience, be sorted out.



Mr Benevolent

A marsinh Chaudhary, Gujarat chief minister, believes in looking after his own. And how!

The latest is that Chaudhary has decided that the lowly Ambassador won't do for his ministerial colleagues. So, they are to be gifted fancy Contessas, orders for which have already been placed.

And there's more. To ensure that they don't miss out on the Rajivdarshan dished out on the tube the CM has decided to present all 18 ministers colour television sets.

Who do you think is going to foot the bill? The state government, of course.

Well, at least you can't accuse him of being selfish. If he spent lakhs on a private aircraft for himself, he hasn't shied away from squandering the state exchequer for his ministry's benefit.

Quo vadis, Rao?

The political loyalties of former Karnataka chief minister, R. Gundu Rao, continue to intrigue observers. Gossip first had it that Rao was all set to re-join the Congress(I), hot on the heels of Pranab Mukherjee. But that didn't quite come off, and Rao, it was said, was

Gundu Rao: Indeterminate loyalties



Amarsinh Chaudhary: looking after his own

now trying to get a foothold in the Janata Party.

That was, of course, before the Janata Dal came into being. Now the former Sanjay *chamcha* has set his sights on the Dal, dropping broad hints to the party leadership that he'd like to be part of their outfit.

While the Dal rank and file is (understandably) hostile to Rao, their leaders are not terribly averse to his joining. The argument being: if the likes of V. C. Shukla and Ram Lal can get a look in, then how can one possibly get all squeamish about Gundu Rao?

Mantralaya Raj

It was Mantralaya Raj at its best.

The contract for the Matunga Mahalaxmi water tunnel was at stake and the standing committee of the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) refused to grant it to M's Patel Engineering, even though the company had quoted the lowest price in its tender.

Enter the state government. In an 8-page directive it awarded the contract, worth Rs 13.79 crores, to the engineering company, maintaining that the project was vital to Bombay city as it would augment the city's water supply by 454 million litres per day. And that the delaying tactics of the standing committee were not in the public interest. So, the government invoked Section 520(C) of the BMC Act to brush it aside.

The chairman of the committee managed to get his two-bit in, though: "It's done in the contractor's interest, not in the public interest."

Fighting for the spoils

The general council meeting of the DMK saw a showdown between the party MLAs and those of them in government. And no, it wasn't the inefficiency of the ministers, or their inability to look after their constituents, that led to the fireworks.

The MLAs were incensed at the fact that while ministers lived off the fat of the land they had to make do with starvation diets.

The immediate cause was the usual: the requests of several DMK legislators for permits, jobs and transfers had not been entertained by those in government, leading to considerable heartburn in their ranks.

Chief minister M. Karunanidhi watched the unseemly proceedings in silence for



M. Karunanidhi: enforcing discipline

some time and then decided that enough was enough. He intervened to inform those assembled that he had already fulfilled about three-fourths of his election promises. As soon as he saw through those remaining he would quit the post of party leader and the DMK could then choose another supremo. He, Karunanidhi maintained, was tired of acting arbiter in their childish quarrels.

The threat had its effect. The MLAs shut up hurriedly and the ministers heaved a sigh of relief at having got off the hook. But Karunanidhi may have bigger problems round the corner. Apparently, stories about the corruption in DMK ranks have been gathering strength of late, and Karunanidhi is running scared that the Centre may use this as an excuse to fire him.

The countdown begins

It's inexplicable but true. Agra, best known for the Taj Mahal and Red Fort, is well on its way to becoming a VIP constituency. Leave aside the question of Sonia Gandhi's candidature (see Spotlight elsewhere in this issue), there are any number of celebrities who are said to



Subramaniam Swamy: putting a spanner in the works

be keen on standing from Agra. While there has been some talk of the BJP fielding Atal Behari Vajpayee, that doesn't seem to be quite working out. And the Janata Dal seems to have given up on matinee idol (of sorts) Raj Babbar, opting for the Ajit Singh confidante, Ajay Singh, instead.

And with good reason. The grapevine has it that Ajay Singh has been cultivating the constituency rather assiduously, visiting it ever so often to build up pockets of support. Ajay Singh, who began life as a journalist and is also the chairman of the Kisan Trust, seems set to declare his candidature. So, what's keeping him?

Subramaniam Swamy, apparently, who seems intent on putting a spanner in his works. A couple of weeks ago, the Janata Party maver-

ick held a press conference in Agra, charging Ajay Singh with being a Congress agent, who was being paid by the ruling party to jeopardise the electoral chances of the Opposition.

And Ajay Singh, in the time-honoured manner of the small-time politician, after threatening to go to court, now meekly confesses that he won't be suing Swamy, after all. The court fees which, amount to some Rs 4.5 lakhs, are, according to him, way beyond his means.



Ajit Singh: will his protege make it?

Snubbed

It is a rebuff he won't forget in a hurry.

The Raja of Manda was constituting the National Front's manifesto sub-committee on minorities and

V.P. Singh: turned down



decided to invite the young and articulate editor of the Urdu publication *Nai Duniya*, Shahid Siddiqui, on it. V.P. Singh, therefore, wrote to Siddiqui informing him that the presidium of the Front in its meeting in the first week of June had decided to request him to be a member of the committee.

The Raja was in for a shock. For, Siddiqui far from being kicked at the honour bestowed on him, wrote back declining the offer. The reason offered: the National Front had not taken a clear cut stand on the minority issue and had not clarified its position on communal parties such as the BJP. In fact, the Janata Dal, the primary constituent of the National Front, had even decided to go in for seat adjustments with the BJP in the forthcoming polls. So, he couldn't help but dissociate himself from such a configuration.

Minister in waiting

Guess who is the Opposition's environment minister in waiting? None other than the self-confessed Green, Menaka Gandhi.

Of late, the younger Gandhi bahu as been telling all who will listen that the ministry of environment will acquire real teeth once she



Menaka Gandhi

takes over, after the polls. And those who damage our fragile biosphere will incur the modern-day Durga's (remember Khushwant Singh's famous description of her) wrath.

Menaka obviously means business this time. Janata Dal insiders disclose that all smokers are asked to leave the room if Menaka is attending a party meeting. Or, at least, desist from lighting up in Gandhi's presence.

Clothes make the neta

With elections round the corner, business is booming for the *khadi* peddlers of the Capital. One of them has, in the true spirit of free enterprise, set up shop within the Janata Dal headquarters on Jantar Mantar Road. And sure enough the *khadi*, of varying colours, qualities and prices, is selling in huge quantities as the Dal politicians change their sartorial preferences in the face of the forthcoming polls.

The antecedents of the *khadi* seller are of interest, though. Apparently, before putting up his wares at the Dal headquarters, he made quite a pile selling the stuff at the Youth Congress office in New Delhi. As they say, money-making recognises no boundaries—ideological or any other kind. ■



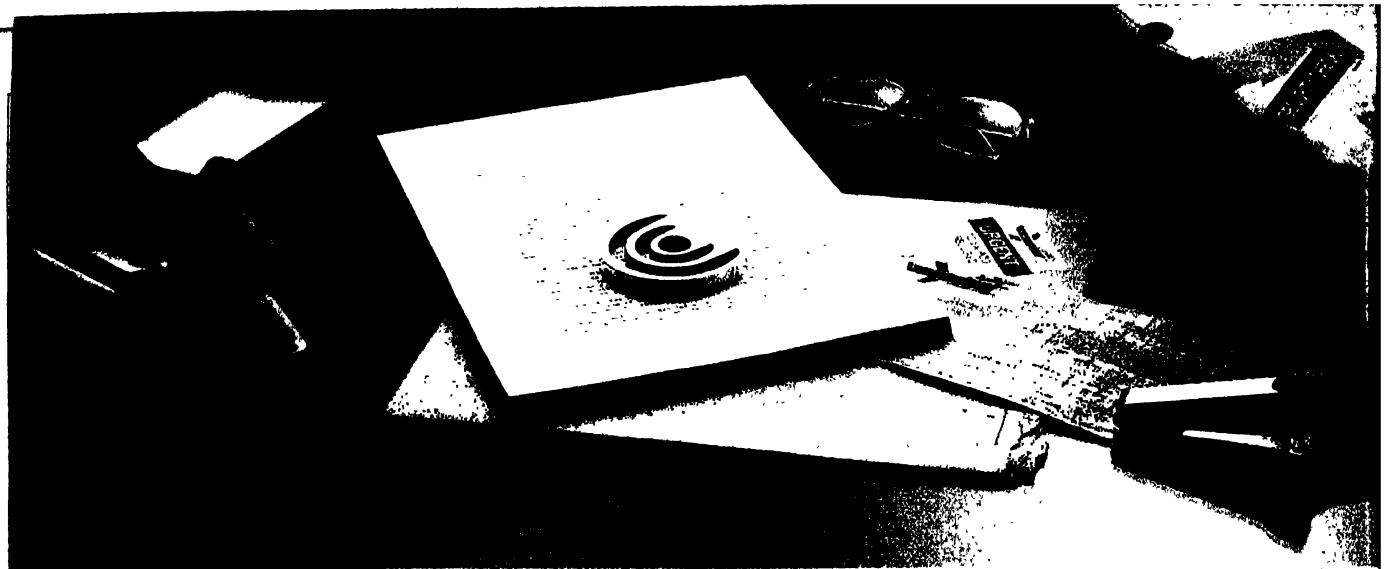
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But tell me, how did you manage to
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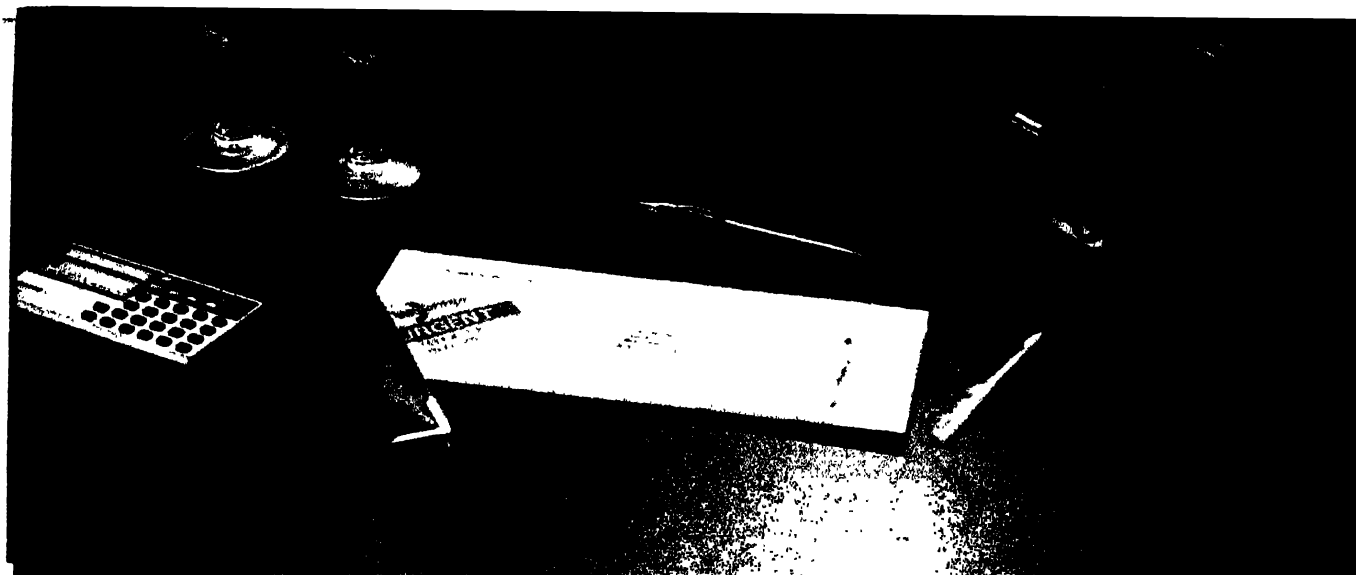
SRI LANKA: THE CRISIS CONTINUES

SUNDAY



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SPEND!
SPEND!**

New money and conspicuous
consumption change the face of urban life



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You brought my NOC overnight!
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Boris Becker and Steffi Graf conquer Wimbledon yet again. And how!

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Opportunistic

Reading the cover story (1979: *Dreams die fast*, 2-7 July) one was reminded of the political scenario in 1979 when the Janata and even Congress leaders were busy fighting like Kilkenny cats. Morarji Desai was the quintessential leader labouring under the weight of obdurate pride and abrasive arrogance, Chavan the great Maratha who was shunted to oblivion by Mrs Gandhi for silently stabbing her in the back, George Fernandes the paper tiger, Jagjivan Ram who had the proverbial nine lives of a cat and who crossed the floor with the shrewdness of a dog, Subramaniam Swamy the self-appointed spy against Mrs Gandhi, Raj Naran the eternal buffoon of Indian politics, and Charan Singh the most cunning of them all. The only point that the Opposition leaders have in common even now is disunity. Can we afford to mortgage the nation to these spineless leaders who will not miss an opportunity to take us for a ride?

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore
(Karnataka)

■ It was an imaginative recapitulation of the drama enacted on the political stage of India. Disillusioned after the dark days of the Emergency, the people voted the Janata Party to power only to find their hopes crashing all too soon. The Janata leaders were only interested in grabbing power for their own interests, the common man be damned. Hopes and aspirations were shattered and it was inevitable that Mrs Gandhi would



(L to R) Jagjivan Ram, Chandra Shekhar, Desai, Fernandes and Vajpayee: power-hungry come back to power.

The scenario is the same today. Opposition leaders do not appear to have learnt from the lessons of the past. The elections are round the corner, with not even a semblance of unity in the Opposition ranks. At present, the Indian political firmament is full of power-hungry and corrupt politicians.

Nanda Dulal Roy Chowdhury,
Kharagpur (West Bengal)

Arm-twisting tactics

The inclusion of India in the trade hit-list by the USA amounts to coercion and arm-twisting to compel India to open its doors to US multinationals (*USA flexes its muscles*, 11-17 June). India has its own trade policies and the US can, in no way, interfere with them. We cannot allow multinationals to gain a foothold in our country and ravage the economy. If India wants to become economically and politically independent, the USA must not be allowed to gain a foothold in our country. The US trade restrictions will hit our exports to that country and cause a great setback to foreign exchange earnings and the balance of payments position. However, the long-term implications of allowing US multinationals to set up companies in India will be far more damaging: they may jeopardise our political stability and freedom.

Yogeshwar Davar, New Delhi

Losing fat

It was heartening to know that science in India has progressed to such an extent (*The suction attraction*, 2-8 July). The liposuction method will bring a ray of hope to all those people who are suffering from an inferiority complex because of their obesity. In fact, the trend is bound to become

we have the Sindhis joining the bandwagon. Through the years, the Sindhis have proved their mettle in different spheres of life. Unfortunately, it requires the efforts of a K.T. Rohra to undo matters and play with the sentiments of the Sindhis. I do, however, support Belraj Jumani's stand on this issue. It is time one thought of the well-being of the country than just one's own community.

A. George, Bombay
(Maharashtra)

■ The report contains an ominous threat for the entire nation. I could have read it and simply forgotten about it, but I guess the Sindhi genes in me could not ignore the serious implications. This is not because I agree with the demands of the World Sindhi Congress, but because I wholly, completely and absolutely oppose them. The article not only annoyed me, but ironically, for the first time in my life, I felt threatened.



A liposuction operation in progress: expensive

popular throughout the country. However, the operation is far too costly for an overwhelming majority of Indians. Steps should be taken so that the cost of liposuction is minimised to help obese people go in for it.

Suhassini Mahapatra, Dhanbad
(Bihar)

We are Indians

No, not again (*And now, the Sindhis*, 25 June-1 July). As if the countrywide demand for separate homelands was not enough, now

Here were some people demanding a demarcation between the Sindhis and the rest of the nation, a demarcation, that I, being an Indian first and a Sindhi later, would never want.

We are quick to condemn a murderer. But what about the persons who distort the thinking process of people; who convert sane patriots into fanatics? I wish people would stop assuming responsibilities for the progress of their respective communities, and instead worked for the development of a united India and its people, whether

they be Hindus, Muslims, Marathis, Gujaratis or Sindhis!

Shweta Hingorani, New Delhi

Filming poverty

Nobody else has highlighted poverty the way Satyajit Ray has (*Return of a master*, 25 June—1 July). The great filmmaker has taken poverty as the theme in most of his films and made



Satyajit Ray: genius

them acknowledged masterpieces. *Ganashatru*, too, is bound to go the way of Ray's other films. The photo-feature of the master at work was interesting. However, the feature would have been complete had you published a biographical sketch too.

Bhavya Shah, Bombay (Maharashtra)

The Post drama

Vinod Mehta deserves to be congratulated for not bowing to the pressures of either the government or the industrialists (*Post Mortem*, 25 June—1 July). However, his resignation from the editorship of *The Indian Post* is a matter of deep concern for those who support and believe in the freedom of the press. It is a matter of shame that Vijaypat Singhania not only sold himself to an unscrupulous government but even instructed his editor to refrain from publishing articles on the powers that be.

The drama at *The Indian Post* has also brought to light the PM's stand regarding the

Crossing limits

If V.P. Singh is the Pamella Bordes of Indian politics, K.K. Tewari is undoubtedly the Christine Keeler (*A talent to abuse*, 25 June—1 July). If V.P. Singh sleeps with Hershman, Haji Mastan, Jyoti Basu and Atal Behari Vajpayee, it only proves that they trust the Raja Sab more than they can ever trust the loud-mouthed Tewari. V.P. Singh and Vajpayee are the shining stars

of Indian politics. Rajiv Gandhi has made a grievous error in trusting K.K. Tewari and appointing him the information and broadcasting minister. Former President Zail Singh had made a wise decision in asking for Tewari's removal from the cabinet. Perhaps, President Venkataraman should take a similar step.

M.A. Razzak, Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

print media. While he vociferously declares that in India the fourth estate is free, he obviously believes otherwise. However, what the powers at the Centre

ple. The word will be written, the voice will be heard. History cannot be changed. **Tanmoy Ghosh and Misty Basu, Calcutta (West Bengal)**

■ Your correspondent's assertion that whoever gets *The Indian Post* will find it a liability, is quite true. For, no industrialist or businessman runs his business on ethical grounds, or is influenced by the policy of *sumum bonum*. After all, how can the affluent, whose sole aim in life is to hoard money and increase their bank balance, ever think of helping a lame dog over a stile? This is evident in a host of cases. Take, for example, the cases of *The Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India* and *Indian Express*, the last is even considered a crusader! What have they been doing except fulfilling the wishes of their proprietors? It is always the prop-



The Indian Post office: making news

should realise is that the press cannot be silenced. Neither the owners of the *Post* nor the ruling mandarins will ever be able to silence the voice of the peo-

rietors who have had the last say—a bit of misunderstanding and editors are promptly kicked out.

A crusading and responsible profession like journalism has gradually turned into a money-making business. The battle can be won only by the joint efforts of scrupulous editors and proprietors. Alas, their number is limited!

Sanjeev Kumar Sinha, Darbhanga (Bihar)

From Bofors

The amount of Rs 22 lakhs in Indian rupees represents \$2.75 lakhs in the current exchange rate (*A mysterious trip*, 18—24 June). In these days of stringent foreign exchange con-



Arun Nehru: expensive holiday

trol, how did Arun Nehru manage the release of such a huge chunk of dollars? And how did he spend a quarter crore of rupees on a single trip? One seriously wonders whether the money can be traced, via the Hinduja's, to the infamous Rs 60-crore Bofors kickback!

Maragatham Saminathan, Tirupur (Tamil Nadu)

■ Even though the column was interesting, it raises doubts in the minds of the reader. How is it that an editor of modest means managed to collect specialised information? Or, is the government using him as a tool to hit out at the Opposition?

M. G. Nair, Jamshedpur (Bihar)

SUNDAY

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Karma yogi chemist



P.C. Ray was not just the founder of India's pharmaceutical industry, he was a scholar and nationalist as well

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Sixty-six years ago Dr P.C. Ray was invited to deliver the convocation address to students of the Aligarh National Muslim University. Convocation addresses rarely rise above banal platitudes and homilies to students because most people invited to deliver them are successful politicians, industrialists and civil servants with no pretensions to academic distinction. They are too busy doing their own things to be able to do more than dictate their speeches to their stenographers and then spew them out to their cloak-'n'-gown audiences. It was different with P.C. Ray and men of his generation. They took trouble over their speeches and being well-grounded in disciplines other than their own, brought the weight of their learning into what they said. Among them, P.C. Ray stood out as an erudite scholar of languages, literature and history. Three convocation addresses delivered to the universities of Aligarh, Mysore and Benaras (compiled by the R.K.B.K. Acharya Prafulla Chandra Sammilanee) make scintillating reading.

Most of the present generation will know of Ray only as a chemist and the founding father of India's pharmaceutical industry. These addresses show he was much more than that. He was familiar with Islamic theology, history and achievements of Muslim scientists through the ages. Being a near agnostic (he was a Brahmo) he was free from religious bias. "Prejudice, bigotry and unreason have been the greatest enemies to human progress throughout the course of man's history," he said. He was for keeping our doors ever open to foreign scholarship. "Not in isolation, rigid and exclusive, but in active intercourse with the modern progressive world does our own progress lie," he said. "There is no humiliation in seeking the truth wherever it may be found." What I found inspiring was his concept of nationalism. He said, "The word 'national'

should only mean that the spirit imbibed, the courses of training gone through in these centres of culture should be such as to instil in the youth of the country a sense of national self-respect, and to inspire them with a passionate desire for national service." To him it was the doer and not the talker, the *karma yogi* and not the hermit who was a true nationalist.

HIS PRAISE for Islam came from his heart. "The message of Islam is democracy, not the pseudo-democracy of the West stultified by distinction of race, colour and wealth, but the real democracy of spirit." After criticising the anti-democratic edifice of the Hindu caste system, he said, "The call of the muezzin sounds from the top of the minaret summoning the faithful to prayer, the *ameer* and the *fakeer*, the *badshah* and the *bhishti*, flock together and squat shoulder to shoulder in the adoration of the Almighty. Islam knows no soul-killing distinctions between man and man." And though speaking to an almost entirely Muslim audience, he ended his speech with a resounding *Bande Mataram*.

Prafulla Chandra Ray was born on 2 August, 1861 in village Raruli-Katipara (now in Khulna district, Bangladesh). He was the third son of a petty zamindar and received his early education in the village school. When he was nine years old, the family moved to Calcutta. He was promptly stricken by acute dysentery which seriously impaired his health. Dysentery was followed by chronic dyspepsia and insomnia. The ailments which stayed with him all through his life proved to be blessings in disguise. The boy who avoided going to his village school by hiding in branches of trees was forced to a sedentary, strictly regimented diet and gentle exercise—and books. He studied Latin, Greek, Shakespeare and the histories of European nations.

P.C. Ray was an erudite scholar. He was familiar with Islamic theology, history and achievements of Muslim scientists through the ages. Being a near agnostic, he was free from religious bias

IT WAS after his intermediate examination from Vidyasagar College that he attended lectures on chemistry at the Presidency College. He won the Gilchrist Prize which gave him a fellowship to study chemistry at Edinburgh University. He returned home and was appointed assistant professor of chemistry at Presidency College on a salary of 250 rupees per month. He spent his spare time in his home (91 Upper Circular Road) writing primary textbooks on chemistry, zoology and other sciences in Bengali. At the same time, with his meagre resources and help from a friend, Dr Amulya Charan Bose, he set up the Bengal Pharmaceutical and Chemical Works. He published the *History of*

Hindu Chemistry in 1909. Honorary degrees were showered on him by Indian and foreign universities. He befriended Gokhale, Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. He spun the *charkha* and identified himself with the freedom movement. Nevertheless, in 1919, the British government conferred a knighthood on him.

Ray spent his later years of retirement living in a single room of the university carrying on his research. He never married and gave away whatever he had saved in scholarships to students and scientific research. He died in his room at the university college on 16 June, 1944 at the age of 83. He left everything he had to his motherland. ■



R.K. LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA

If our relations can be established on a better footing...on a firm footing of friendship...all problems could be sorted out.

S. THONDAMAN, Sri Lankan minister for textiles and rural industrial development, in response to a question on Indo-Sri Lankan relations

I do not wish to enter into a debate on various interpretations of mutual obligations assumed by our two sovereign nations. These are quite clear.

RAJIV GANDHI, Prime Minister, in a letter to the Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa

My only inference is that having lost the battle for Bihar and his place in the durbār, he is trying to regain the favour of the sovereign.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN, Muslim leader and Janata MP, on Tariq Anwar's statement that he (Shahabuddin) is not the sole representative of the Muslim community

And now people expect Farooq Abdullah to stamp out terrorism in a day. You expect me to make heaven out of a state which has been left to die for 40 years.

FAROOQ ABDULLAH, chief minister Jammu and Kashmir

I am just coming from Kalanaur in Gurdaspur district. I saw no guns. I only saw thousands of people lined up to greet me.

S.S. RAY, Governor of Punjab, on whether the elections in Punjab will be again held under the shadow of guns

People have realised that the Congress(I) is the real cause of the Punjab problem.

SURJIT SINGH BARNALA, Akali Dal leader

If somebody is sleeping, you can wake that person. How do you wake up somebody who pretends to be sleeping. That is the Janata Dal.

VUAYARAJE SCINDIA, Rajmata of Gwalior

Any fight against corruption loses credibility the moment the CPI(M) is associated with it.

MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI, BJP general secretary

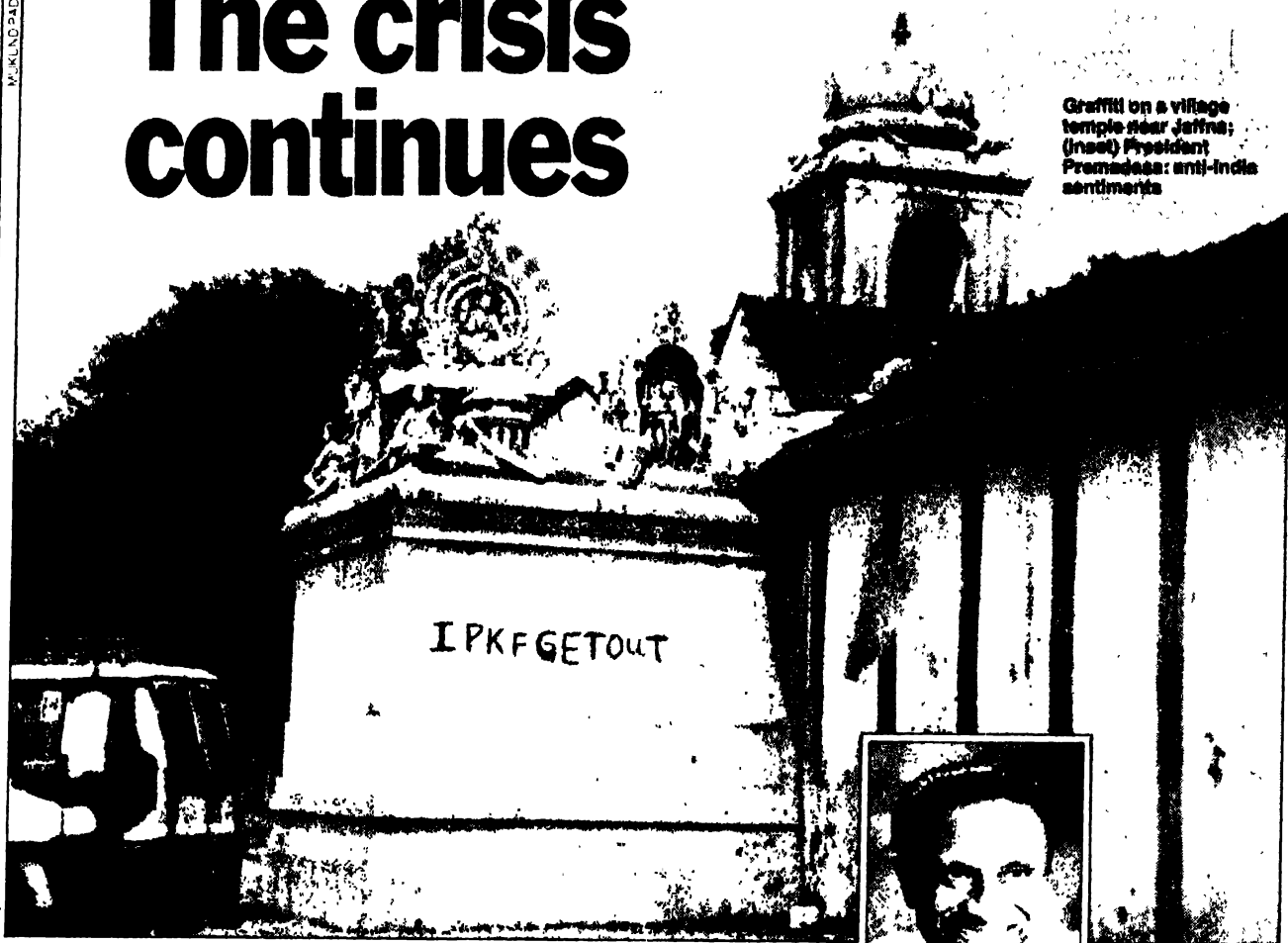
People will not believe a word of what Rajiv Gandhi or Veerendra Patil say. Because they are all liars. People also know me. It is not as if I dropped from the skies the other day. I have been in state politics for over 35 years. It will certainly backfire on the Congress(I).

RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE, Janata Dal vice-president, on the Centre's decision to appoint a commission of inquiry to probe the land deals involving him

He stuffs cotton wool in his ears.

MAMATA BANERJEE, Congress(I) MP, on Union minister Vengala Rao, whenever she has approached him to discuss the various industrial problems of West Bengal

The crisis continues



Graffiti on a village temple near Jaffna; (Inset) President Premadasa: anti-India sentiments

The diplomatic deadlock between India and Sri Lanka threatens to turn into an all-out confrontation

Will the Sri Lankan forces come out of their barracks in the north and east if the Indian army doesn't leave by the end of July?

Why not? Somebody will have to look after the areas.

But wouldn't this lead to a major row between India and Sri Lanka?

Let it be so. We will meet the hurdle when we have to jump it. As far as we are concerned, the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) is an occupation army after this date.

The exchange—between the press and Sri Lanka's foreign minister Ranjan Wijeratne during an official briefing on 13 June—said it all. His President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, was more than just serious about the July-end deadline (by which time he demanded that the IPKF be completely with-

drawn). He was even prepared to risk an all-out confrontation with India and its army if he wasn't obeyed.

From that moment on, the fate of principal secretary B.G. Deshmukh's three-day mission was evident to all those present at the briefing. Deshmukh had arrived in Colombo as Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's special emissary the preceding day (12 June). He had formally handed over a letter from Rajiv on the withdrawal crisis; talked to the President one-to-one for about half an hour; and, later, participated in discussions with Wijeratne and a couple of senior Sri Lankan bureaucrats.

Although New Delhi described Deshmukh's visit as "exploratory", many assumed that it would result in a solution to the diplomatic crisis. This, despite the letter he carried to Premadasa being Rajiv's most unequivocal and blunt. In part, the letter dealt with familiar

themes. Rajiv reiterated that the withdrawal of the IPKF is linked to the satisfactory implementation of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord and that a schedule for pulling out should be arrived at through mutual consultation. But he threatened that if Sri Lanka was not willing to talk, "we (India) will have to decide on the details of the IPKF's withdrawal unilaterally, consistent with our responsibilities and obligations under the Indo-Sri Lankan accord". The Prime Minister was also angry that the letters he had exchanged with Premadasa were made public. Rajiv argued that while the practice has been "to maintain the confidentiality of all official correspondence, particularly between heads of state or government", Premadasa's action may force him to "depart from this tradition". Sure enough, copies of his letter were made available to the press by Indian high commission officials in Colombo

soon after it was handed over to Premadasa.

Premadasa's recent letters to Rajiv have been just as strong but the suspicion was that the exchanges were only the official face of the diplomatic imbroglio. That it was natural for both the leaders to indulge in some bluff and bluster for reasons of expediency. The feeling was that political wisdom would prevail and that both Rajiv and Premadasa would prevent the situation from becoming irreparable. But last week, the Indo-Sri Lankan relationship, which over the last couple of months has gradually moved towards the edge, seemed in real danger of hurtling down.

Deshmukh's visit ended, as an Indian government spokesman described it, "inconclusively"; and Premadasa's latest letter (on 14 June), in which he laid down pre-conditions for discussing the withdrawal issue with India, was unacceptable to New Delhi. And then, the situation was further aggravated with the unexpected and brutal murder of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) secretary-general A. Amirthalingam and his associate V. Yogeswaran.

The TULF leaders were gunned down at Amirthalingam's Bullers Road residence in Colombo on the evening of 13 June by three youths. Two of the assailants were shot dead by his bodyguards and the third, who was seriously injured, is in hospital. Within an hour of the incident, Indian high commission officials were telling the press that the assassinations were the handiwork of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The problem with this was establishing motive. After all, why would the LTTE, which has declared a "cessation of all hostilities" and is trying to reach a political settlement with Colombo, suddenly resort to wanton killing?

However, there was support for the Indian view. The youths were invited into Amirthalingam's house by Yogeswaran, who directed the security guards not to frisk them. This lends credence to India's claim that the assailants were an LTTE delegation that had come to discuss the withdrawal issue with the TULF leaders by pre-arrangement. Moreover, the Indians identified the dead youths as Visu and Aloysius, members of the LTTE team which is negotiating with Colombo. This was confirmed by a couple of journalists who were allowed into the residence soon after the murders. And then of course, hadn't the LTTE passed a death sentence on Amirthalingam a few years ago?

The attitude of the Sri Lankan govern-

ment also suggested that it was shielding the LTTE. The Sri Lankan police, which initially let the press visit the murder site, was suddenly instructed to keep all journalists out. Though police officials claimed this was because "investigations were on", it is possible that Colombo had become aware of the LTTE's hand in the killings. The following day, the LTTE denied any involvement in the assassinations. "We suspect diabolical forces are at work to discredit our organisation and to disrupt our current peace talks with the Sri Lankan government," the statement it issued said. The suggestion was that India or one of the Tamil militant groups it supports was behind the murders.

As for the Sri Lankan government, it hasn't yet identified the killers. Premadasa, while mourning the death of the

TULF leaders in a speech, charged a "foreign power" with trying to create dissension in his country. It is believed that, like the LTTE, he was obliquely implicating India for what happened.

At the time of going to the press, it is unclear why Amirthalingam was murdered. It is possible that the attack on him was unplanned. The youths, after all, were engaged in discussions for a good ten minutes with the TULF leaders before they fired at them. Could they have shot them in a momentary fit of anger? Could the positions taken by the TULF leaders on the withdrawal issue have sent them into a rage? It is not an implausible scenario. For why would the youths—LTTE or other—carry out the assassinations in circumstances that would have certainly resulted in their own death? Moreover, no organisation,



A. Amirthalingam: mysterious assassination

The killing of the TULF's Amirthalingam hardened New Delhi's diplomatic posture. It also gave India the opportunity to reiterate that the LTTE cannot be trusted and that it is not serious about political settlement

particularly the LTTE, would have been willing to risk the political fall-out from being involved in such an assassination attempt at this juncture.

The killings, as an official spokesman of the Indian government hinted, have led to a further hardening of New Delhi's diplomatic posture. They have also given India the opportunity to reiterate what it has been saying all along—that the LTTE cannot be trusted, that it is not serious about reaching a political settlement and that talk of "cessation of hostilities" is just so much hogwash.

The Indian strategy for dealing with Premadasa's embarrassing demand that the IPKF go home by July-end is now clear as crystal. The idea is to pressure him to back off and New Delhi has taken a number of steps—some of

them extremely dangerous and questionable to do so. The main ploy appears to be to frustrate the talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. By launching an unprecedented attack on the Tigers, New Delhi believes it can destroy any chance of a political settlement between the LTTE and Colombo. After all, one of the LTTE's pre-conditions for reaching an agreement is the withdrawal of the IPKF. What the IPKF offensive has done is to show up the Sri Lankan government as one which cannot provide the Tigers security even as they are negotiating with it.

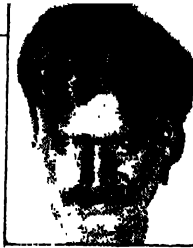
The other stratagem is to hold the threat of Eelam over Premadasa. India has remained deafeningly silent about the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front's (EPRLF) threat to "unilaterally declare independence" if the Sri Lanka government fails to implement all the provisions of the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. The EPRLF forms the government with a couple of other pro-India militant groups in the Tamil-dominated North-Eastern Province.

There have also been reports in the Indian press that New Delhi is considering the Eelam option. That India is prepared to carve up Sri Lanka and recognise Eelam under the leadership of the EPRLF-led government. It is possible that such reports have been planted by New Delhi and are no more than yet another ploy to force Premadasa to climb down. But it is just as possible that New Delhi now believes that the only way it can save face in Sri Lanka is a Cyprus-type solution.

Recently, the EPRLF chief minister Varadaraja Perumal called for a convention of all Opposition parties in the island to "defuse the prevailing tension" that has arisen over the demand for the IPKF's withdrawal. In Colombo, this is viewed as an India-inspired attempt to rally opinion against the President. While it is debatable whether Perumal was instructed by India to do so, it is difficult to imagine that India was wholly unaware of the move. There is little that the EPRLF does without India's knowledge and consent.

But the most cynical and dangerous Indian ploy is what is now known as the 'abduction issue'. In the middle of June, the Sri Lankan press raised the issue of mass kidnapping of Tamil youths in the North-Eastern Province by the EPRLF and its junior coalition partner, the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF). It was said that the youths were being kept in camps and imparted military training. Apparently, the EPRLF and ENDLF were doing so

M. K. NO. PASVA VASHAN



The EPRLF's K. Elango denies that his party is forcibly conscripting Tamil youths. "We are only taking those who are willing," he says

because they feared being wiped out by the LTTE in the event of an Indian withdrawal. Premadasa also voiced his concern about this in one of his letters to Rajiv. But the first unofficial confirmation that large-scale abductions were taking place came in July. A Jaffna-dated report filed by *The Tele-*

Jaffna town: strong armed presence

graph's correspondent claimed that the kidnappings were taking place with the knowledge and possibly connivance of the IPKF. The report attracted much notice in Colombo and upset New Delhi and the Indian high commission no end.

But it will hardly do for India to pretend any longer as if forcible conscriptions are not taking place. They are an open secret in Jaffna (and possibly everywhere else in the North-Eastern Province). In Jaffna, at least, the evidence stares the visiting correspondent in the face. On any given day, over a hundred distraught parents, most of them mothers, crowd the EPRLF office to seek the release of their sons. Some of them weep uncontrollably. The EPRLF does not deny that it has recently admitted a large number of youths into camps for arms training. What it denies is that they have been forcibly conscripted. Says K. Elango, the EPRLF's political chief in the Jaffna peninsula, "We are only taking those who are willing." When asked why military training was necessary, he re-



plied, "The provincial government was elected by the people. So it is our duty to safeguard and strengthen it."

In Jaffna, the parents will tell you otherwise. The visiting correspondent is likely to be approached by a number of parents, who beg for something to be done to secure their sons' freedom. "Please speak to the IPKF on our behalf" is the usual request.

Rasamuthu, a middle-aged woman from a village near Thondamanar in the peninsula, had her 19-year-old son Arundavaraja abducted by the IPKF on 17 June. Arundavaraja was picked up further south at Killinochchi and taken to the EPRLF's camp at Thondamanar. She was allowed to see him thrice, but the EPRLF wouldn't allow her to take him home. "Then suddenly, on my fourth visit, I was told that he wasn't at the camp any longer and that I cannot see him any more," she says. "I have no idea where he is or what is being done to him." Rasamuthu has written to the local government representative, but nothing seems to have come of that.

It is unlikely that anything will. For most of the youths—25,000 according to



MUKUND PADMANABHAN

Says EROS' general secretary V. Balakumar, "The abductions are a fascist act. We are worried about India's attitude towards this"

the LTTE's estimate—the only way out is escape. Suresh, a 24-year-old youth from Valvettithurai, is one of the lucky ones. He was abducted by the ENDLF at Killinochchi when he was making his way by bus to Colombo. He says he was taken to the ENDLF's camp at Killinochchi, given arms and asked to train. And that when he refused, he was beaten up so badly that he had to be taken to hospital. "I was very fortunate to be able to escape along with four others," he recalls. "We chose the right moment. The ENDLF members were busy teasing some schoolgirls who were passing by the camp. That is when we made good."

SUNDAY was witness to a round-up by the EPRLF at Puttur, about 20 kilometres north of Jaffna town. Two open vans with at least 30 gun-toting EPRLF youths were engaged in the operation. They had already picked up eight young boys, who were stripped to the waist, seated on the floor of the vans and surrounded by their captors. The abductors turned hostile when SUNDAY approached them, but became extraordinarily friendly on realising that they were dealing with an Indian journalist. However, on being asked who the terrified boys in the van were and whether photographs could be taken, the leader of the gang turned antagonistic once again. This correspondent was told very firmly to be on his way.

It is difficult to understand what good New Delhi's policy of turning a blind eye to what is happening will achieve. The abductions have destroyed the reputation of the IPKF—which has obviously been directed to allow the EPRLF and ENDLF a free hand. "The people have begun to think that the IPKF is directly responsible for what is going on," says a Jaffna resident. "Nothing now can res-

tore the popularity it enjoyed when it came to Sri Lanka two years ago."

Army officers are visibly unhappy over the IPKF being portrayed as an accessory to the kidnappings and feel that its reputation is being sacrificed in favour of New Delhi's immediate political interests. "There is little that we can do," says one. "The army is not allowed to defend itself. We cannot even tell people that we are merely executors of decisions taken by politicians in New Delhi."

By allowing the abductions to take place, the Indian government has allowed the EPRLF government—which it props up—to destroy whatever little political credibility it enjoyed. Says the Eelam Revolutionary Students Organisation's (EROS) general secretary V. Balakumar: "The abductions are fascist acts and the people hate what is going on. We are worried about the Indian attitude to this. The IPKF should do something to prevent this at once." Most people feel that the EPRLF—the great Indian hope for fulfilling the accord—has kissed its political future goodbye. "Doesn't the party realise that every boy who is kidnapped has parents, relatives and friends who are armed with votes?" asks a citizens' committee member in Valvettithurai.

One consequence of this has been a swing in the sympathy towards the LTTE. In Jaffna, even those who are fiercely opposed to any form of militancy remember the LTTE as an organisation which, although brutal, never resorted to terrorising apolitical Tamil people. "By choosing to kidnap just about anybody, the EPRLF has taken on something it cannot afford to—the Tamil people themselves," says a citizens' committee member of Jaffna. Says Theepan, the 19-year-old political chief of the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula, "The EPRLF—and with it India—have played into our hands. The Tamils now know that only the Tigers can protect them."

The Indian tactic of getting at Premadasa may come good—that is, force him to climb down. The question is what all this will lead to in the long run. With the Tamils becoming increasingly suspicious of and resentful towards India and the Sinhalese no friendlier than they were before, India will have a hard time in trying to make the accord work. There is always the Cyprus-type alternative of course. But in a country where the people are becoming more and more opposed to India's role, this could mean Vietnam.

Mukund Padmanabhan/Colombo and Jaffna



With the general elections drawing near, both the Congress(I) and the Opposition indulge in gutter politics

DIRTY

The next general elections is going to be a no-holds-barred, free-for-all affair with political parties pulling out their dirtiest tricks to discredit opponents in every conceivable way. And, the rules of the game have been set by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi himself. He has demonstrated that parliamentary decorum and adherence to truth are passe. He does not believe in pulling his punches where the Opposition is concerned and has chosen to benignly look on while government agencies and his ministers outdo each other to hit political opponents below the belt.

Rajiv Gandhi has set the tone for the pre-election propaganda war with remarks that have now passed into history. Examples:

- Every single officer of the National Front is a history sheet with charges of rape, corruption and murder against him.
- Our enemies are not the enemies of the Congress(I), but those of the country.
- Anti-national forces are trying to destabilise our system. They are exploiting all manner of issues to create disunity, division and fragmentation. Their aims are sinister. They want to break up the unity of this country by any means and at any cost. To this end, they are indulging in all kinds of machinations. They are manipulating opinion. They are spreading disinformation. They are indulging in character assassination.

Some of the Prime Minister's utterances have even bordered on the vulgar. On 30 March last year, the day several Rajya Sabha members were retiring, CPI(M) member Nirmal Chatterjee, in the course of his farewell speech, remarked that unlike others who retired only to return again, his was going to be a "maiden retirement". To this, Rajiv Gandhi responded: "Some members who are retiring have gained experience, others have yet to lose their maidenhood. Let us only hope it does not lead to permanent spinsterhood." In a similar vein, while campaigning in Tamil Nadu late last year, the PM declared: "I wonder whether the DMK is looking straight into your eyes when

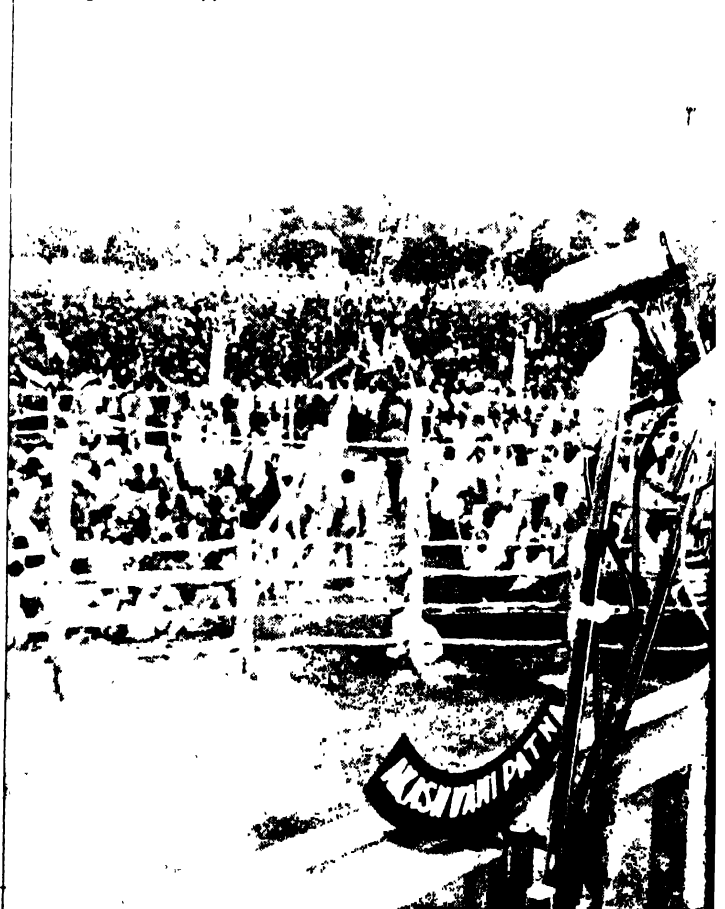
they say something—or are they hiding behind their very dark glasses." Of West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu, Rajiv Gandhi once remarked: "He needs someone to hold his stand."

Taking a cue from the Prime Minister, other Congress(I) leaders too have taken to denigrating the Opposition. Professor K.K. Tewari, Rajiv Gandhi's minister of truth, has carved out a niche for himself in this regard. Tewari's gems include:

- V.P. Singh is the Pamella Bordes of Indian politics.
- Devi Lal is a buccaneer and bandit, pure and simple bandit.
- Look at NTR. Is he not the symbol of all that is nationally unacceptable?

Tewari's propensity to burst into abuse has only enhanced his reputation within the Congress(I). And Tewari, in the process, is being stirred to achieve greater depths of depravity. At a recent INTUC meet in Calcutta, he turned his

Rajiv Gandhi addressing an election meeting in Patna: hitting out at the Opposition



In an election year where there are no burning issues to exploit, the ruling Congress(I) strategists believe that the more ridiculed the Opposition leaders are, the more votes the party will get

TRICKS

attention to the state's ruling Marxists, calling them "seasoned betrayers" who never flinch for a moment in bartering away the nation's interests. In the course of the same speech, Tewari dubbed V.P. Singh a "spy", Arun Nehru a "gaddar" and Ram Jethmalani as a "sort of pimp". The Haryana chief minister was likened to a "thug" busy looting the state, while N.T. Rama Rao, according to Tewari, was an "obscurantist" who wears sarees and dresses like a woman at night.

In an election year where there are no burning issues to exploit, the ruling Congress(I) seems to be banking on the negative vote. Its unspoken slogan appears to be: There is no alternative to the Congress(I) and Opposition leaders are, in any case, a worthless bunch of scoundrels. The Prime Minister's election strategists believe that the more ridiculed, discredited and exposed Opposition leaders are,

the more votes the Congress(I) will get. Whatever be the wisdom of this line of thinking, the Prime Minister is convinced it will work.

The idea is not just to prove to the electorate that the ruling party has been working for the benefit of the people but also to hammer home the point that the Opposition, in contrast, has been actively engaged in sabotaging national progress. Thus, after the launch of the Agni intermediate range missile, Rajiv Gandhi was not content to merely gloat. It was an ideal opportunity to take a swipe at the Opposition. "Those who wanted to stop the launch of Agni are traitors," he thundered, adding, "These traitors should be thrown away. Lend your strength to the Congress(I) to serve the country." Rajiv Gandhi insinuated that while the government had resisted pressures from foreign powers to stop the test, the Janata Dal in Orissa had launched a movement against the testing. He rhetorically asked whether the foreign powers and the Janata

Dal were acting in collusion. The suggestion was patently unethical because nowhere in his speeches did the Prime Minister mention that the Janata Dal was not against the missile test *per se* but against the choice of the test site. Nor did the Prime Minister acknowledge that Opposition leaders had actually complimented Indian scientists on the launching of Agni.

But then ethics has been banished long ago. The ruling party has shown that it is determined to use every means to get at its political rivals. The blatant use of the supposedly impartial Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to fix political opponents is an ominous pointer. The CBI was first exposed when it got after S. Gurumurthy in the backdrop of the *Express*-Reliance feud. Gurumurthy, who had done a series of investigative stories on Reliance, was charged with violating the Official Secrets Act. CBI chief Mohan Katre was immediately accused of protecting the interests of Dhirubhai Ambani and harassing the *Express*.

In the Syed Modi murder case, the CBI leaked Amita Modi's diary, which suggested that she had intimate relations

At a recent INTUC meeting in Calcutta, K.K. Tewari dubbed V.P. Singh a "spy", Arun Nehru a "gaddar" and Devi Lal was likened to a "thug"



with Janata Dal leader, Sanjay Singh. CBI officials, at that time, had insinuated that this established the involvement of Sanjay Singh and Amita Modi in the brutal murder of the badminton champion. In the Czech pistol affair too, the CBI investigation appeared to be motivated by one factor: the desire to nail Arun Nehru. A case was registered last year but so far the CBI sleuths have not managed to come up with anything concrete. Given the manner in which the government has been behaving, recent reports suggesting that the government is contemplating widening the scope of the CBI are indeed frightening.

But then the stakes for the ruling Congress(I) are high and the prospects of being voted out of

power terrifying. No small wonder then that every dirty trick is in evidence. And the prime target is V.P. Singh, the one Opposition leader capable of rallying the anti-Congress(I) forces in the country. Apart from being heaped with abuses, Singh has been a victim of several underhand shots. On 14 May this year, *Jan-mabhoomi Pravasi*, a Gujarati daily, carried a letter allegedly written by Jayaprakash Narayan on 23 December 1975. In the letter, JP described V.P. Singh as a person with "no ideological convictions" and a "pure self-seeker and *jee-huzur*". The letter, which created a predictable storm, was written to Prabhakar Mehta, son of the late Balwantrao Mehta, former Gujarat chief minister. The story goes

THE ROW OVER RICE

Rajiv Gandhi provokes N.T. Rama Rao

Controversy never ceases to dog Rajiv Gandhi whenever he is in Andhra Pradesh. Several years ago, he made a remark at Hyderabad's Begumpet airport which became a focal point of Andhra chief minister N.T. Rama Rao's electoral plank and ultimately catapulted the Telugu Desam to power. More recently, he stirred up a hornets' nest when he made a controversial statement while speaking at Cuddapah on 15 June, which was repeatedly shown on television. Coming down heavily on chief minister N.T. Rama Rao, Rajiv Gandhi accused him of

"cheating the tribal people" of 20 paise on every kg of rice that the state government sold to them. According to the Prime Minister, the Centre sold the rice to the Andhra government at Rs 1.80 per kg, but contrary to Delhi's wishes that it be sold at the same price in the state, the rice was being sold to the tribals at Rs 2 per kg.

Needless to say, NTR and other Telugu Desam bigwigs fretted and fumed. Terming Rajiv Gandhi's charges as "childish", the saffron-clad chief minister remarked: "A person holding the high office of Prime Minister should regard himself as Prime Minister of the country, rather than of a party. Persons holding such high office should make criticism with an intelligent approach and not with prejudice."

Countering the charge on coarse price, NTR said, "The base price of the coarse variety of rice supplied by the Centre for distribution among the tribals was Rs 1.85 per kg. In 1983, it rose to Rs 2.05 following subsequent revisions in the issue price. Even this price was exclusive of transport and handling charges which work out to 25 paise per kg." At the same time the chief minister pointed out that the "coarse rice was not acceptable to the tribals".

The obvious fact missed by the Prime Minister was that the price of subsidised rice sold in areas under the integrated tribal development programme in the state was never Rs 1.80. When this scheme was introduced in 1985, the issue price of the Food Corporation of India was Rs 1.60 per kg for coarse, Rs 1.70 for fine and Rs 1.85 for the superfine varieties. The state government had to add 25 paise per kg towards transport and handling charges. Hence, coarse rice was sold at Rs 1.85, fine rice at Rs 1.95 and superfine at Rs 2.10 per kg. In

Rajiv Gandhi with NTR: no love lost



The CBI is being used by the Congress(I) to fix opponents. In the Czech pistol affair, for example, the CBI investigation appeared to be motivated by one factor: the desire to nail Arun Nehru



V.P. Singh with Devi Lal: under attack

January this year, the rates were hiked again: Rs 2.19 for the coarse variety, Rs 2.79 for fine and Rs 3 for superfine rice. Tribals, however, dislike the coarse variety, consumption of which accounts for around three per cent of the total quantity of rice distributed in tribal areas.

Incidentally, the 2 July issue of the *Indian Express* carried a story to point out that except Orissa, where rice was being sold to tribals at Rs 2 per kg as in Andhra, all other Congress-ruled states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh sold rice at Rs 2.19. In order to sustain the price at Rs 2, the Andhra government had to provide subsidy which cost the state exchequer Rs 11.70 crores annually, against Orissa spending Rs 9 crores as subsidy.

Yet another charge made by the Prime Minister at Cuddapah was the poor quality of rice supplied to the tribals by the state government. The Prime Minister at one stage, during a visit to a tribal area, remarked, "I even tasted the rice but Rama Rao refused to do so." Following the *Express* story, V.P. Singh wrote a letter to Rajiv Gandhi saying: "Is it or is not a fact that far from your having complained about the poor quality of rice supplied to the tribals, it was N.T. Rama Rao, who, on 22 October, 1986, sent you 22 samples from the consignment of rice despatched by the Centre to show the extremely poor quality of rice which was being sent by your government for consumption by tribals? Is it not a fact that the rice sent by your government was indeed of poor quality?"

Mukundam C. Manon/Hyderabad

that the editor of *Janmabhoomi Pravasi*, Harindra Dave, had persuaded Mehta to part with the letter when he came to know of its existence. Opposition members however felt the letter was a forgery and part of a grand Congress(I) plan to smear the Raja's reputation.

The Congress(I)'s attacks on V.P. Singh are proving to be effective. Singh and his supporters seem to be on the verge of paranoia. Recently, a story in the *Indian Express*, claiming that the 'dirt and filth department' was shortly going to release two damaging letters allegedly written by V.P. Singh, spread panic in the Raja's circle. The *Express* story said that Syed Ashraf, who was a member of the Raja's coterie, had been seduced by the Congress(I) and had apparently agreed to release the letters. One of the letters, according to the *Express* story, records the Raja's 'thanks' to Haji Mastan, and the second is also a 'thank you note' supposedly written to a person working in a Western government.

Ashraf himself claims to be innocent. About the *Express* report, he cryptically remarks: "I have not been instructed by the leadership to contradict it." Ashraf did not, however, entirely dispel the suspicion that he is disaffected and would perhaps like a position of authority in the Janata Dal. When contacted by SUNDAY after the publication of the *Express* report, he said: "They've offered me a post but I have refused it." In the same breath he added: "If the leadership asks me to be an office-bearer, I will accept it." Ashraf was also very keen to put on record that "the Dal should give proper representation to minorities at all levels. The Janata Dal should clear its stand on Babri Masjid..."

Jan Morcha leader Ram Dhan is convinced that Ashraf is a mole planted by the Congress(I). He

The prime target of the Congress(I) is V.P. Singh, the one Opposition leader capable of rallying the anti-Congress(I) forces. Apart from being heaped with abuses, Singh has been a victim of several underhand shots



Latoori Singh (left) at a Congress function: enter the criminals

says that Ashraf had "descended in the Jan Morcha office in suspicious circumstances. But when I learnt from very reliable sources that Mr Ashraf had been planted to keep his bosses informed of the activities of V.P. Singh and other Morcha leaders, I threw him out of the Jan Morcha and informed the public about it through a press note on 1 April, 1988." Ram Dhan says he had advised the Raja to disassociate himself from Ashraf but that his suggestion was disregarded.

Some Opposition leaders have begun stressing Sonia Gandhi's "*videshi*" (foreign) credentials and making a big thing of the fact that Rajiv has married a foreigner. These Janata Dal leaders are reported to have plans of making '*Deshi* versus *Videshi*' their poll campaign slogan. This line of thinking was in evidence at the recent Janata Dal meet in Bangalore, where the Prime Minister was charged with being a "foreign virus" affecting the culture of the nation.

More and more Opposition members seem to prefer the atmosphere of the lower depths. And a new combativeness is in evidence in the speeches and statements of many Opposition leaders. One of the Opposition's hard-hitters in the Harvard educated journalist-politician, Mohan Guruswamy, who is a close friend of V.P. Singh and a member of the national executive of the National Front. Says Guruswamy: "Rajiv Gandhi's mentality and larcenist tendencies predate his entry into politics. His record at Doon School, as indicated in his yellow card, No. 203, shows that he forged signatures to draw money. This is not a childish prank. The Parliamentary *Who's Who* describes Rajiv as having been 'educated in Trinity College'. Did you know that he actually flunked after his first year and had to go elsewhere? This tendency to gloss over and talk glibly is an old habit..." And so it goes on. The way Indian politicians are taking to unparliamentary means to fight their battles only proves that politics is a dirty game.

Indian politics has indeed become the first resort of scoundrels. The Congress(I), espe-

cially in the Hindi belt, is busy recruiting criminals, whose services would be exploited during the elections. Take Pandit Ram Gopal Misra, the Congress(I) candidate for the chairmanship of the Sitapur *zilla parishad* in Uttar Pradesh. Misra has various criminal cases against him in police stations spread across the state. Yet, he was elected unopposed as chairman of the *zilla parishad*. Opposition parties apparently did not dare field candidates against him.

Another underworld veteran, Om Prakash Gupta (again from Sitapur) was the Congress(I) candidate for the chairmanship of the Misrikh-Neemsar *nagarpalika* in Sitapur district and was elected unopposed in the recent polls. Gupta's name was reportedly proposed by the UP public works department minister, Ammar Rizvi, despite the fact that 42 cases, including that of murder, attempt to murder, robbery and dacoity, have been registered against Gupta. But nobody dares to testify against him in court. And, like Misra, Gupta too moves around freely.

The late Union communication minister, Veer Bahadur Singh's home district, Gorakhpur, returned a record number of Congress(I)-affiliated criminals as block *pramukhs* (chiefs) last year. They include Nagendra Rai, who carried a rewards of Rs 50,000 on his head, and Surendra Singh, who is accused of having murdered, among others, a police constable. The UP Congress(I) president, Balam Singh Yadav, once told a correspondent: "If such persons (with criminal records) are given responsibilities, they will mend themselves."

There are dozens of legislators in UP and

Sonia with Rajiv: the '*videshi*' factor



There are dozens of legislators in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar with criminal records. Many are accused of crimes ranging from trespass to murder

Bihar with criminal records in police files. Many are accused of cases ranging from trespass to murder. These cases are either not investigated or pursued so half-heartedly that convictions are rare. Meanwhile, the criminal-politicians enjoy all the trappings of power and brazenly sport their criminal records. Sadly, the Opposition parties too have opened their doors to these elements. The CBI is reported to have collected evidence of Janata Dal members having criminal records. Raj Bahadur Singh, a Janata Dal MLA from the Bayalasi constituency of Jaunpur district (UP), survives in politics despite his notorious police record: six cases of murder, two of dacoity with murder, six of attempt to murder, five of dacoity, three of robbery, apart from several other cases relating to abduction, rape, trespass, wrongful confinement and assault on government officials. Raj Bahadur's great criminal trail helped him to secure a Janata ticket in the 1985 UP Assembly elections. The Janata Party, at the time of nominating him, described him as a "promising candidate". And Raj Bahadur fulfilled the promise. Despite being in jail during the elections, he won.

Another such stalwart is Sarju Prasad Saroj, who was elected from the Pratapgarh Assembly constituency on a Congress(I) ticket but who recently crossed over to the Janata Dal. The charges against Saroj include kidnapping, criminal assault, wrongful confinement, land grabbing, extortion and theft. Saroj was first elected on a ruling party ticket in 1980. Shortly after, he was implicated in the abduction of a rickshaw puller's daughter, who was later found in his village. The girl alleged that she had been criminally



K.K. Tewari: spearheading the Congress(I) campaign

assaulted by Saroj. He was rewarded with a deputy ministership and was later elevated to the level of a minister of state.

The Congress(I), however, seems to have taken the lead in welcoming criminals into its fold. At a glittering function organised at Etawah on 25 March this year, UP Congress(I) chief Balam Singh Yadav clasped Latoori Singh Yadav in a bear hug and welcomed him into the party even as cameras clicked and videos whirled. Latoori, declared Balam, would strengthen the party. Perhaps he was talking literally. For, Latoori has 18 cases of assault, attempt to murder and homicide against him. Latoori himself was badly injured in a shootout outside the Allahabad High Court. Yet, Balam Singh Yadav maintains: "Latoori is not a criminal. He is a widely respected man. V. P. Singh tried to implicate him in a number of false cases when he was chief minister of UP because Latoori had opposed the Raja's policy of fake encounters against the Yadavs."

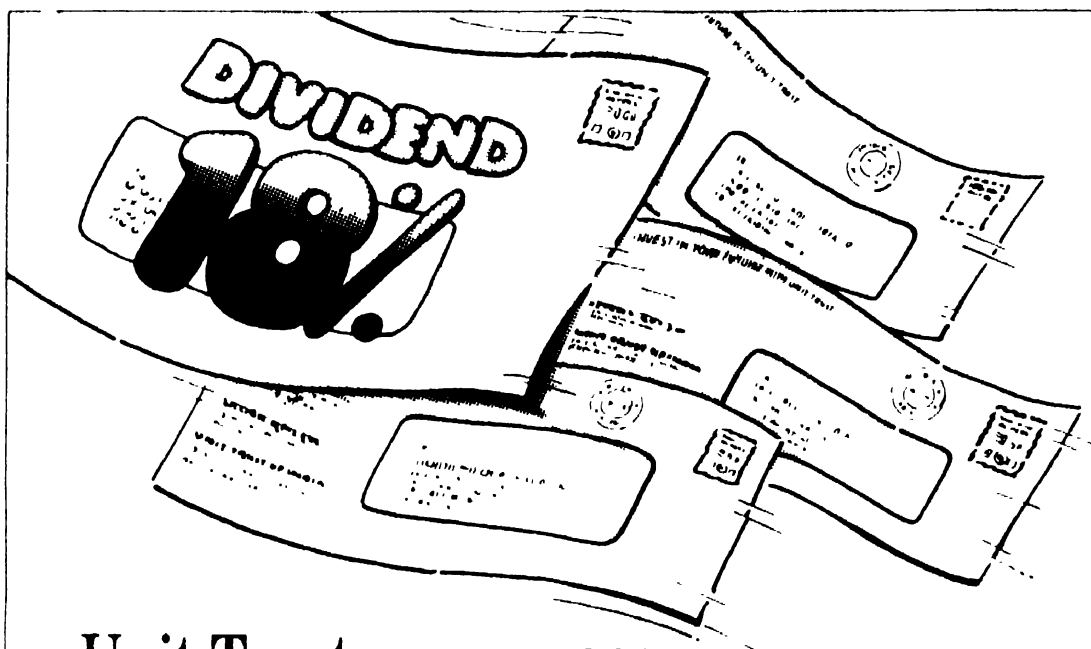
In yet another function held at Etawah more recently, it was Darshan Singh's turn to be embraced by Balam Singh Yadav. Till recently a close associate of UP Janata Dal chief Mulayam Singh Yadav, Darshan Singh ran a flourishing business in money lending. Hurt at being deserted, Mulayam Singh tried to make out that the Janata Dal was fortunate to be rid of Darshan Singh. Said Mulayam Singh: "Darshan Singh is a hardcore criminal who fleeced the poor and liquidated those who owed him a debt." In the past, however, Mulayam Singh would defend the money lender by saying: "Gandhiji had told us you must never judge a man by his past."

If the Indian politician is to be believed, everything is justifiable; what matters is the end: to grab power at the Centre. The use of invective, the induction of criminals, the lies and conspiracies are, however, only a prelude. The new rules—or rather the lack of them—have only been defined. The dirty war will begin in earnest when the elections are formally announced.

Patralekha Chatterjee/New Delhi

**Some
Opposition
leaders are
stressing
Sonia
Gandhi's
videshi
credentials to
embarrass
the PM.
Several
Janata Dal
leaders are
also planning
to make
'Deshi vs
Videshi' their
poll campaign
slogan**





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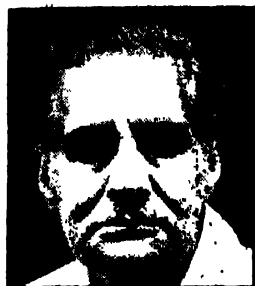
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It pays to be loyal



Being pro-establishment has its own dividends

KULDIP NAYAR

It was interesting to see in some newspapers M.F. Husain's sketches on the happenings in China. Sensitive as he is, Husain has been able to portray the expression of triumph on the faces of the young Chinese defying the oppression of their rulers. The alacrity with which he has drawn the sketches indicates how much he has been affected by the brutality of the killings.

But why did he not feel the tyranny of the Emergency when one lakh people in India were detained without trial and when every semblance of liberty was snuffed out? At that time, Husain, in fact, went to the other extreme and presented Indira Gandhi in three sketches: Goddess Durga, Goddess Kali and Goddess Chandi.

I could have understood it if Husain, who is now a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, had remained silent because very few artists, writers and academics had the boldness and courage to speak out against the regime at that time. But, at least, they did not side with the oppressors. Husain did not even sign the letter of protest which some artists and writers wrote to Mrs Gandhi.

Husain's sketches at that time served as an instrument of propaganda in favour of Mrs Gandhi's authoritarian rule. True, she represented *shakti* (power), if that was what Husain meant to convey, but she used power to crush dissent and demolish institutions. Till today, there is not a single sketch of Husain to recall the people's suffering during those 21 months of the Emergency. The impression is that he does not want to tread on the toes of the powers-that-be in Delhi.

I AM sorry if I sound harsh, but I am upset that a person like Husain should have two yardsticks to measure suffering—one for outsiders like the Chinese and the other for his own countrymen. But why blame Husain alone? Ali Sardar Jafri is a big name in Urdu poetry. The number of

poems he has written in favour of the have-nots and against oppression probably exceed the total works of Husain. But during the Emergency, Jafri was saying poems in praise of the Emergency and what Mrs Gandhi had done.

Kaifi Azmi was an exception, although his daughter, Shabana, could not resist the pressure of the authorities who made her appear on television in a variety of programmes in praise of the Emergency. I wish she had shown the same defiance then as she did at the International Film Festival to protest against the killing of Safdar Hashmi. Shabana's role was minimal, but persons like Jafri and Husain went on and on. The least they could have done later in atonement was to offer a public apology for their lapse—if they feel it was that. But probably they do not.

I have vainly asked Menaka Gandhi and V.C. Shukla to offer a public apology. If they want the public to forgive them for the role they played during the Emergency, a public apology is the minimum for their rehabilitation. The fact that they already occupy high positions in the Janata Dal does not automatically absolve them of their misdoings.

IN FACT, Menaka Gandhi, if her interview to one of the newspapers is any indication, is critical of only the press censorship clamped during the Emergency. In other words, detention without trial, the Turkman Gate demolitions in Delhi and hordes of other excesses were not *mala fide*. She has not condemned the Emergency categorically. The sooner she does so, the better it is for her and the Janata Dal of which she is a secretary-general.

The Janata government could not do much to punish those guilty of Emergency excesses. This was partly due to the fact that it was in office for too short a time, partly

because it was inefficient, and partly because most officials were "loyal" to Mrs Gandhi. Some who helped Mrs Gandhi during the Janata rule have benefited thereafter.

One of them is R. Dayal, then metropolitan magistrate of Delhi, who gave orders for her release in a case filed by the Janata government against her. When she returned to power, he resigned and joined the Union law ministry, from where he was later picked up for a High Court judge's post. A premature news story stalled his appointment in Orissa, where protests by the state bar were too vociferous to be ignored by New Delhi. Subsequently, he was appointed to the Sikkim bench. And it is here that Dayal has created a

situation which is said to have embarrassed even Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The entire subordinate judiciary in the hill state has stopped functioning since 27 May clamouring for Dayal's transfer so as to be able to "carry on its judicial work with prestige and dignity".

Perhaps the most telling episode relates to Dayal's claim for reimbursement of expenses incurred on his private residence in Delhi where his family lives. The Sikkim High Court registrar prepared a note to raise the question whether Justice Dayal was entitled to reimbursement of Rs 12,000 on this account though he "ordinarily resides in the official residence located at Gangtok". ■

Till today, there is not a single sketch of Husain to recall the suffering during those 21 months of the Emergency. The impression is that he does not want to tread on the toes of the powers-that-be in Delhi

The great land scam

The Maharashtra government's decision to de-reserve 285 plots to boost commercial activity in Bombay is widely seen as a Rs 2,000-crore deal. But is it so?

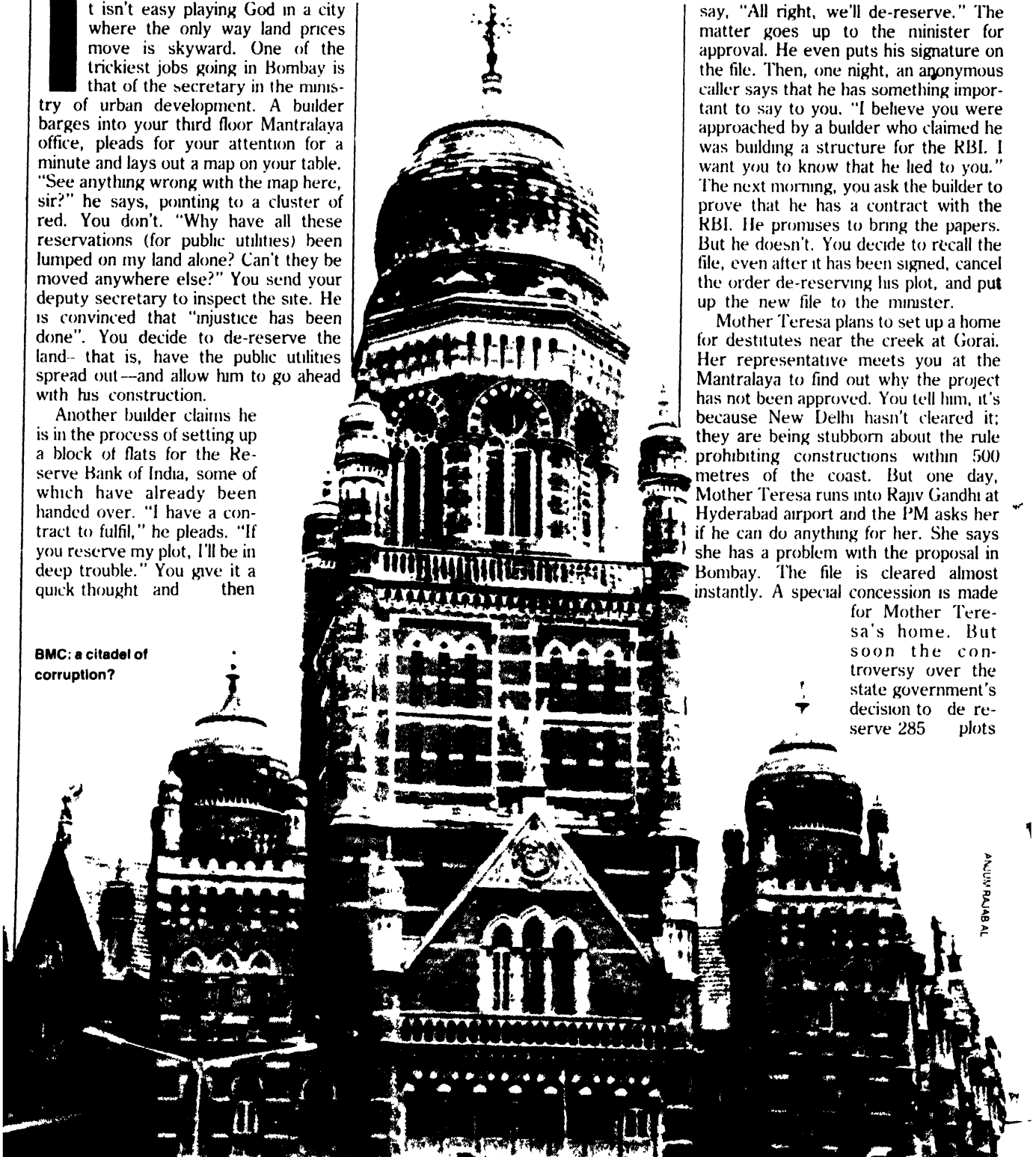
It isn't easy playing God in a city where the only way land prices move is skyward. One of the trickiest jobs going in Bombay is that of the secretary in the ministry of urban development. A builder barges into your third floor Mantralaya office, pleads for your attention for a minute and lays out a map on your table. "See anything wrong with the map here, sir?" he says, pointing to a cluster of red. You don't. "Why have all these reservations (for public utilities) been lumped on my land alone? Can't they be moved anywhere else?" You send your deputy secretary to inspect the site. He is convinced that "injustice has been done". You decide to de-reserve the land—that is, have the public utilities spread out—and allow him to go ahead with his construction.

Another builder claims he is in the process of setting up a block of flats for the Reserve Bank of India, some of which have already been handed over. "I have a contract to fulfil," he pleads. "If you reserve my plot, I'll be in deep trouble." You give it a quick thought and then

say, "All right, we'll de-reserve." The matter goes up to the minister for approval. He even puts his signature on the file. Then, one night, an anonymous caller says that he has something important to say to you. "I believe you were approached by a builder who claimed he was building a structure for the RBI. I want you to know that he lied to you." The next morning, you ask the builder to prove that he has a contract with the RBI. He promises to bring the papers. But he doesn't. You decide to recall the file, even after it has been signed, cancel the order de-reserving his plot, and put up the new file to the minister.

Mother Teresa plans to set up a home for destitutes near the creek at Gorai. Her representative meets you at the Mantralaya to find out why the project has not been approved. You tell him, it's because New Delhi hasn't cleared it; they are being stubborn about the rule prohibiting constructions within 500 metres of the coast. But one day, Mother Teresa runs into Rajiv Gandhi at Hyderabad airport and the PM asks her if he can do anything for her. She says she has a problem with the proposal in Bombay. The file is cleared almost instantly. A special concession is made for Mother Teresa's home. But soon the controversy over the state government's decision to de-reserve 285 plots

BMC: a citadel of corruption?



breaks out, and the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) files a writ petition before the High Court. Mother Teresa's project has to wait.

On a given working day, the office of Maharashtra's secretary of urban development, Dinesh Kumar Jain, is invaded by any number of representatives of voluntary agencies, builders, real estate agents, liars and cheats. Often you can't tell one from the other. The officer has to decide each case as soon as possible—or face the prospect of dealing with an even taller mountain of petitions in a corner of his room. Sometimes, he doesn't care to ask his visitors for documents. Nobody is perfect, he knows. So when the press flashes the story of how 285 plots were gifted away and a nervous chief minister Sharad Pawar asks him if he is sure that the decision in each of the 285 cases was correct, the secretary becomes indignant: "That isn't fair, sir. Am I expected to be infallible? I took the decisions to the best of my ability."

Perhaps, the CM is convinced. But who would believe that a proposal for such vast changes in the city's plan to boost commercial activity would be made without the hint of a bribe? Nothing on this scale had ever happened before. Some 285 plots reserved for public facilities like parks, playgrounds and hospitals in the Greater Bombay Draft Development Plan (1981-2001) are reverted to their original residential or commercial land-use—largely at the instance of private agents and builders who reap an enormous harvest. So the inevitable happens: newspapers bill it as the "land scam of the century". Some see in it a Rs 2,000-crore deal. *Blitz's* R.K. Karanjia says he will bring up the matter before Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Environmentalists demand to know how the state government could think of obliterating public amenities like parks in a city which had the world's lowest ratio of open space, an abysmal 0.49 hectares per 1000 population. And politicians argue that if the Congress has to make money to fund its election campaign, it cannot do so by squeezing the life out of Bombay.

No sooner had it become known which plots reserved for public purposes in the draft development plan the state government proposed to remove, than the sharks swam in. All a builder had to do was approach the owner of a reserved plot, promise to get his land "released" for residential or commercial use by the bosses at Mantralaya and persuade him to sell it for a better price than the market rate of a reserved

The mass deletion of reservations sent environmentalists scurrying to the High Court, and Sharad Pawar's political rivals like A. R. Antulay and Nasikrao Tirpude flexed their muscles in a bid to get even with the Maratha lobby for the manner in which it humiliated them

ties cannot be built on small plots. Going by the value of the total commercial floor space the de-reservation will make available, newspapers have estimated it to be a Rs 2000-crore scam. The government has managed to make computation of the profits even more difficult by not disclosing the exact location and measurement of the 285 plots it de-reserved. But details of about 20 are known. Calculating on the basis of the sale prices of these plots alone, the hush money involved would work out to an enormous sum. Consider some instances:

- Permission was given to convert the drive-in theatre at Bandra into a theatre-cum-commercial centre with a floor space of about 9 lakh sq feet. The market value of the commercial space, calculated at the rate of Rs 4,000 per sq foot in an adjoining commercial complex, would be Rs 500 crores. According to



Sharad Pawar: can he weather the storm?

plot—Rs 500 a square foot. Once "released" the plot could be sold for anything between Rs 2,000 and Rs 4,000 per square foot of floor space. The arrangement suited everybody. The original owner had an offer he couldn't refuse; the middleman made his profit; the buyer got a prized plot of land.

Rebel Congressmen like Chandrashekhhar Prabhu talk of an enormous amount of money having changed hands. According to him, most of the 285 plots which were reserved for public amenities, but were de-reserved later, would measure between 10,000 and 50,000 sq feet each because such ameni-

ties cannot be built on small plots. Going by the value of the total commercial floor space the de-reservation will make available, newspapers have estimated it to be a Rs 2000-crore scam. The government has managed to make computation of the profits even more difficult by not disclosing the exact location and measurement of the 285 plots it de-reserved. But details of about 20 are known. Calculating on the basis of the sale prices of these plots alone, the hush money involved would work out to an enormous sum. Consider some instances:

- A plot of land on Hasnabad Lane next to the Catholic Gymkhana in Santa Cruz, measuring 1100 sq metres, released for commercial activity, would fetch a pecuniary advantage of Rs 20 crores for the builder (at a market rate of Rs 2,000 per sq foot). Rs two crores would have gone into bribes.

- A plot at Mafatlal Processing Mill on Pattebaburao Marg measuring 28,000 sq metres, which was initially designated as a recreation ground, and was housing the dishoused, a municipal hospital and a

dispensary, was released for commercial use with a floor space of 3 lakh sq feet. Akshay Builders Developers booked the land at Rs 2,000 per sq feet. This generated a pecuniary advantage of Rs 60 crores for the builder. At least Rs 6 crores would have been paid in bribes.

- At least nine cinema halls are to be used for commercial activity. For one of these halls, Ambar-Oscar-Minor in Andheri, the going rate of floor space is Rs 1000 per sq foot and for another, Barkha-Badal-Bijh in Matunga, the rate is 2,000 per sq foot. For seven other halls, Central Cinema in Girgaum, Daulat on Pattebaburao Marg, Dharti in 'F' ward, Bharat Mata and Shree in Dadar, Kala Mandir in Bandra and Ram aur Shyam in Jogeshwan, the rate is over Rs 2,000 per sq foot. None of these plots would fetch less than Rs 4 crores. So, added together, the hush money on all nine halls would be nothing less than Rs 3.6 crores.

- Take six other plots which figure in a writ petition filed by Shyam H.K. Chaman and the BEAG before the Bombay High Court: a 33,726 sq metre plot on Malabar Hill, a 14,000 sq metre plot in Malad, a 63,357 sq metre plot in Kiroli, a plot measuring 256,000 sq metres at Gorai which was reserved as a no-development zone (NDZ) and subsequently de-reserved for an amusement park with some commercial construction, a 546 sq metre plot in Mazagaon division and another 1101 sq metre plot in Bandra. The total area released for commercial activity adds up to at least 1 lakh sq metres or 10,76,300 sq feet. At an average rate of Rs 1,500 per sq foot, the pecuniary benefit from these plots would amount to Rs 161.45 crores. Ten per cent of that amounts to Rs 16.15 crores.

That brings the hush money on all these plots to a minimum of Rs 64.15 crores. And this doesn't include what the transactions over 265 other plots might have netted for builders, property agents and government servants. Even if one ignores the figure of Rs 2,000 crores as an exaggeration, there seems little doubt that a lot of money clandestinely changed hands.

The trouble began when the BMC and the state's urban development ministry couldn't agree over what the Second Draft Development Plan for Greater Bombay (1981-2001) should look like. Early in the Sixties, the BMC carried out a survey, prepared a land-use map of the city and its suburbs, and drew up a draft development plan. Meanwhile, in 1966, the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning (MRTP) Act came into force, making the BMC the planning



The Bharat Mata theatre: for pecuniary gain

authority for Greater Bombay. Under the Act, the BMC is required to revise the development plan at least once in ten years. The BMC's first plan received the sanction of the state government in January 1967, making it the First Draft Development Plan for Greater Bombay.

The 1967 plan was to be implemented in ten years. It was budgeted at Rs 505 crores, of which Rs 118.3 crores was to be spent on acquisition of property for construction of amenities and Rs 384.57 crores on development. According to state government officials, BMC has not even maintained an account of its expenses on the first plan. The actual expenditure on acquisition of buildings between 1964 and 1978 turned out to be Rs 8.98 crores because BMC could hardly implement the plan. Only three to four per cent of the plan materialised and the lands reserved for public amenities were frozen. Said a state government official: "This unnecessarily deprived many people of real estate because even though they were banned from building structures on their plots, BMC failed to create the public amenities it planned to set up."

The 1967 plan was due for revision in 1977. But BMC declared its intention to first revise the development control rules—which regulate building activity in

the area—in accordance with the MRTP Act. Once that was done, the BMC published and submitted the Second Draft Development Plan to the government for approval in May 1983. In September 1986 the Bombay Development Plan Advisory Committee headed by J.B. D'Souza was appointed to see what was wrong with the plan and make suggestions.

In July 1987, the committee came up with the first major revision of the development control rules, and in August 1987, it gave in its report on the second development plan, 1981-2001, in which it deleted 120 reservations, without assigning any reason. The committee accepted that its recommendations fell far short of Bombay's requirements, so it had "agreed to drop reservations very, very sparingly, placing community needs well above fancied, or even real individual hardship". According to the committee's estimate, the second plan would need Rs 6,886 crores till 2001. Urban development officials are deeply cynical about these figures. Said one of them: "The committee felt the BMC had the money but later the BMC itself admitted it couldn't cough up more than Rs 20 crores a year. So where was the money going to come from?"

On 5 May, 1989, urban development



ANJUM RAJAB ALI

minister Ishaque Jamkhanwala told journalists of the government's decision to release 285 plots reserved under the second development plan. The minister said he was declaring the list because the government was concerned about the allegations that money had changed hands. (The allegations originated mainly from the BMC.) The minister said a total of 174 plots had already been released earlier and another 174 were de-reserved in March and April 1989. He said that in the case of 131 plots, 47 were recommended for release by the BMC's planning committee and 84 were released by the government.

The government's reasoning is that it was pointless keeping aside plots up to 500 sq metres for public amenities—in one case, it alleged, a plot of 159 sq metres was reserved for a playground—because they are too small to be used for public purposes. Also, the BMC hardly possessed the resources to develop such amenities. The reservations were made by the BMC's planning committee and approved by the D'Souza committee. Government officials hint that in some instances the reservations were made so indiscriminately that they reeked of insensitivity. At any rate, the government maintained, they "were not in the public interest".

The mass deletion of reservations sent environmentalists scurrying to the High Court and Sharad Pawar's political rivals—like A.R. Antulay and Nasikrao Tirpude—flexing their muscles in a bid to get even with the Maratha lobby for the manner in which it humiliated them. While a criminal complaint filed by M.P. Khanvilkar, an architect and lawyer close to Antulay, alleged that Pawar, Jamkhanwala and Jain had committed an offence under the Criminal Procedure Code by allowing certain individuals to make huge profits to the detriment of public interest, to settle the deal, Shyam H.K. Chainani and the BEAG sought a stay on the de-reservation on the plea that it would lead to "a disastrous deterioration in the living conditions in the city at the cost of the environment".

At least nine cinema halls are to be used for commercial activity. For halls like Daulat on Pattebaburao Marg and Bharat Mata in Dadar, the going rate is over Rs 2,000 per sq ft. The hush money on the nine halls would be nothing less than Rs 3.6 crores

Chainani argued that the changes made in the development plan were so substantial that the government was legally bound to inform the public about them and solicit objections if there were any. There was no conceivable way in which the deletion of such a large number of plots (according to a speech Jamkhanwala had made in the Assembly earlier, no less than 577 plots were sought to be deleted, not 285) could be claimed to be done "in the public interest" because Bombay is already a congested city. The government's permission to individual owners to develop their plots pending finalisation of the plan is grossly illegal because it seeks to create a *fait accompli*. The D'Souza committee had pointed out that "given a modest degree of prudence" the development plan was within the BMC's means. And the figure of Rs 6,886 crores which D'Souza said BMC would need to finance the plan was calculated

on the basis of "current" prices—in 1986 (when D'Souza gave in his report). He never predicted the inflationary component.

Government officials are visibly nervous and dismissive about all this. A number of them are upset that their careers might be seriously jeopardised. To have to suffer humiliation at the fag-end of their careers is bad enough. But for the past three months, a top official in the urban development ministry said, all they have been doing is preparing to face the courts. They are aware they have been used by private interests and politicians but there is nothing much they can really do.

On specific allegations levelled against the government, officials have their answers ready. The Bandra drive-in falls within the jurisdiction of the Bombay Metropolitan Regional Development Authority and is outside the development plan, they say. So, how is it relevant? The playground at Hasnabad Lane measures 6,400 sq metres of which 2,000 sq metres has been kept aside for a police station—at the specific request of the Khar Residents' Association. How could any money change hands on a "deal" between the state government and the police? As for the Mafatlal Mill ground, the plan originally kept aside 3,540 sq metres for a recreation ground, 1,355 sq metres for a maternity home and dispensary, another 4,700 sq metres for housing the dishoused—which means people who would be displaced by the development of the plot, not dishoused people in general. The BMC subsequently deleted all these reservations, except the playground and housing. The government decided to delete the playground to 2000 sq metres and delete housing, too, "because all such reservations in the first plan, with a few exceptions, never materialised".

Where the battle between the government and citizens leads the court to is impossible to say. But it is ironical that the government is having to argue the BEAG case with the "real villains of the piece"—who, urban development officials say, are the BMC and its chairman S.S. Tinaikar—on their side. It was the BMC, they say, which leaked confidential documents to the press and it was the BMC which messed around with the development plan and left matters for the state government to settle. But the truth, they are sure, will come out.

Regardless of the outcome, the fate of Bombay in the year 2001 is a certainty: it will be a taller, noisier, more deaf, unhealthy and congested city than it has ever been before.

Nirmal Mitra/Bombay

Divided we stand

Muslims and backward classes prefer to go it alone rather than forge an electoral alliance

In these days of alliances and poll pacts will the forthcoming parliamentary elections witness the emergence of a minorities front? Will the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes join hands against the Congress?

Not likely, says Janata Dal leader Arif Mohammad Khan. The history of elections in independent India has clearly shown that a party representing a single group or community lacks mass appeal. "Muslims want to become part of the national mainstream. They are proud of their past history and lost glory. They do not like being singled out as an oppressed group. The same thing applies to the Harijans also. They want to forget that they are Harijans," feels Khan. So, he explains, people are unlikely to find the idea of a minorities front attractive.

Khan, a one-time student of sociology at Aligarh Muslim University, also says that such an alliance is not feasible from a sociological point of view. At the village level, Muslims tend to forge closer links with caste Hindus than with the people belonging to lower castes. They would not hesitate to eat at a Hindu's house, but would think ten times before doing the same at a Harijan's home. This is because they are very particular about eating only 'halal meat'—since a large number of caste Hindus are vegetarians, Muslims do not hesitate to eat at their houses. "This kind of social interaction brings them much closer to the caste Hindus than to the Harijans. So, any kind of electoral front comprising only the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes does not seem to have a future."

It's not surprising then that Kanshi Ram, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supreme, is reportedly not thinking in



Syed Shahabuddin: will he sway the Muslim masses?

terms of an electoral bloc of minorities and Harijans. His primary political objective is to defeat the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal in as many constituencies as possible. While addressing a BSP rally in Bhubaneswar on 9 July, Kanshi Ram made it clear that he has no ideological differences with or affinity to either the Congress(I) or the Janata Dal or the National Front. His sole aim is to emerge as a power to reckon with in the coming election.

This is also the goal of the Muslim lobby under the leadership of Syed Shahabuddin, who recently held a national convention of Muslim leaders in Delhi. Though Shahabuddin can by no means be described as the most influential Muslim politician, he seems to be the only one who has done painstaking research on minorities—their electoral status and strength and the place of Muslims among them. His elaborate, though unnecessarily detailed, strategy for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections, however, did not evoke much enthusiasm at the convention.

Qamar Kazmi, president of the UP state unit of the All India Muslim Majlis and one of the participants at the convention, publicly denounced Syed Shahabuddin for being a "frustrated individual" and challenged him to defeat Arif Mohammad Khan in an electoral battle. President of the All India Muslim Majlis-

e-Mushawarat and a former Union minister, Zulfiqarullah, too issued a statement against the politics of Syed Shahabuddin. Kazmi criticised Shahabuddin for treating Muslims like a "commodity". Arif Mohammad Khan, a long-time detractor of Syed Shahabuddin, condemned him for talking of selling the Muslim vote to the highest bidder. He also pointed out that the convention could not be described as a success as it had failed to attract most Muslim MPs, legislators, corporators and those who have earlier held these positions.

However, it is difficult to outrightly dismiss Shahabuddin and his brand of politics. According to a document released by him prior to the convention, religious minorities constitute 17.5 per cent of the country's total population. Muslims happen to be the largest minority group (11.75 per cent of the Indian population and 67 per cent of the population of minorities). Eighty-five per cent of the Muslim population is concentrated in nine states—UP, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir. Shahabuddin feels that ideally speaking, there should be 62 Muslim MPs in the Lok Sabha, which has a total strength of 545. However, he draws attention to the fact that the highest number of Muslim MPs ever in the Lok



Kanshi Ram of the BSP is not thinking in terms of an electoral bloc of minorities. His primary objective is to defeat the Congress(I)

Kanshi Ram campaigning in Allahabad: the BSP's influence is restricted to UP

Sabha was 48 (in 1979) and they have never been represented in the House in direct proportion to their numerical strength.

According to Shahabuddin's calculations, there should be 13 Lok Sabha members from UP, 9 from West Bengal, 8 from Bihar, 4 each from Maharashtra, Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh and Assam, 3 from Karnataka and 9 from other states and Union Territories including Lakshadweep. His ideas for the promotion of so-called Muslim interests seems to cast doubts on his faith in secularism.

Shahabuddin has divided parliamentary constituencies into three broad categories: those where Muslim voters account for more than 50 per cent of the electorate or Muslim-dominated constituencies; those where the strength of Muslim voters varies from 20 to 50 per cent or Muslim-concentration constituencies; and those where Muslim voters range between 10 and 20 per cent or Muslim-influenced constituencies. And by his reckoning, there are about 80 Lok Sabha constituencies where Muslim voters account for more than 20 per cent of the electorate.

But how does Shahabuddin intend to secure a 'fair' representation for Muslims in Parliament? He has already announced that if the Janata Dal or the National Front forms an alliance or

agrees on a seat adjustment formula with the BJP, then the Muslims will not cooperate with it. Now that discussions between the Janata Dal and the BJP are under way, it is likely that they will eventually have seat adjustments in most places. That leaves Syed Shahabuddin with the option of joining hands

with the Congress(I).

However, it is not yet clear if the Muslim voter will follow leaders like Shahabuddin. It is widely believed that during the past three or four years, Muslim disenchantment with the Congress(I) has grown because of communal riots and the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi controversy.

But political commentators like Rajinder Puri believe that Muslims' electoral behaviour will not be any different from other sections of society and they will vote with the mainstream voters. However, communist parties have been insisting that any attempt on the part of the Janata Dal or the National Front to come to an understanding with the BJP will totally alienate the minorities and force them to join the Congress(I). It is too early to say which of these two perceptions is correct.

Kanshi Ram's BSP does enjoy influence in Uttar Pradesh, but it is not clear if it will be in a position to tilt the balance in other states as well. In any case, Ram too has kept his options open.

However, one thing is clear: both the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are unlikely to come to an electoral understanding. Nor have they found other partners in their quest for power.

Kuldeep Kumar/New Delhi



Says Arif Mohammad Khan, "Muslims and Harijans want to become part of the national mainstream." So, they are unlikely to find the idea of a minorities front attractive

BULLIES IN UNIFORM

Army jawans go on the rampage at Lalgarh station

The late-night Lalgarh-Ambala passenger train was about to start its journey from Lalgarh Junction in Rajasthan on 4 July. The train was packed but many more passengers were desperately trying to board the overcrowded compartments. Suddenly, cries of pain rent the air and people began running helter-skelter with army jawans armed with iron rods, hockey sticks and even crude weapons in hot pursuit. The angry men in uniform—they all belonged to the 14th Sikh Light Infantry and the 111 Engineers Corps—beat up the civilians mercilessly and even pulled out passengers from the compartments and thrashed them. Not many escaped the wrath of the rampaging jawans. In less than an hour—between 10.15 and 11 pm—the busy Lalgarh Junction resembled a war-ravaged site: broken furniture, scattered belongings of passengers, and many of the injured lying in pools of blood.

Ten-year-old Saroj was sitting near the window of an unserved compartment eagerly waiting for the train to move out, when she saw people running all around. And, before she could understand what had happened, an iron rod hit her in the eye. She started bleeding and fell unconscious. Maniram (36), another passenger, was dragged out by the lawless jawans and beaten up with hockey sticks and iron rods. He ran to the station master's room for shelter, but the armymen followed him there. They beat him till he fell unconscious. According to Maniram, the jawans were shouting, "Babbar Khalsa Zindabad" while they went about damaging railway property and beating up civilians. There are many others who testified to Maniram's version.

But the passengers were not the only ones to be manhandled. Senior railway officials too were made a target of the jawans. K.P. Singh, the guard of the Lalgarh-Ambala passenger train, was in the assistant station master's (ASM)

room when the trouble started. The jawans reportedly entered the ASM's office and beat up the occupants. Later, Singh was rescued and rushed to the hospital.

Railway property and costly equipment were also damaged by the rampaging jawans. The window panes of most of the ticket counters were smashed, telephones broken and electronic equipment destroyed. In sheer panic, some passengers bolted the doors of their compartments from inside. But the jawans broke open the windows with iron rods to gain access. In fact, the train was so badly damaged that it has been rendered unserviceable. The office of the Government Railway Police (GRP) within the station premises was also attacked and guns snatched away by the marauding jawans.

The brutality did not end there. Some of the jawans chased the passengers to the nearby residential quarters of the railway employees. When Bhagirath Mali did not open the door of his house the jawans broke their way in and beat up his family. They even damaged a scooter which was parked inside.

But why did the jawans suddenly turn berserk? According to Sardar Pyara Singh, the officiating station superintendent of Lalgarh, it was a seemingly innocuous incident that started the fracas. An army jawan and the officer in charge of the army's movement control office at the railway station, Havildar Jaspal Singh, got into an argument with railway officials over the issuing of travel warrants. Both of them, according to the station superintendent, were drunk and when they tried to manhandle a railway employee, GRP officials intervened. By now, the passengers too sided with the railway staff and tried to persuade the army jawans to see reason.

Fearing a possible attack from the civilians, the other jawans who had come to the station went back to their barracks which were nearby, and informed



GOPAL SINGER



GOPAL SINGER

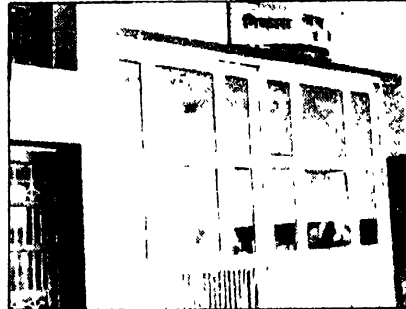


The rampaging army jawans beat up the civilians mercilessly and destroyed railway property. They even pulled out passengers from the train compartments and thrashed them with hockey sticks and iron rods

(Clockwise from bottom left) The injured being treated in hospital; broken window panes of the Lalgarh Junction: wanton destruction



GOPAL SINGER



GOPAL SINGER

their colleagues. At around 10.20 pm, ten minutes before the scheduled departure of the Lalgarh-Ambala passenger, over a hundred jawans of the 14th Sikh Light Infantry and the 111 Engineers Corps arrived at the station. They were all in uniform and were armed with hockey sticks, iron rods and other weapons.

The police arrived at Lalgarh at around 11.30 pm, after everything was over and the rampaging jawans had retreated to their barracks. But, argued, B.S. Chauhan, the superintendent of police, Bikaner, "The police acted in the fastest possible manner. The deputy controller of railways first informed the police of the incident at 10.55 pm and the police were on the spot by 11.20 pm. At

11.25 pm the additional SP reached the railway station and I too was on the spot by 11.45 pm. By then the miscreants had run away but we managed to nab five of them." Countered Sardar Pyara Singh: "In fact the police were contacted at 9.30 pm when the army jawans were having an argument with the railway staff. But the police turned up after more than two hours. Had the cops arrived on time, the mishap could have been prevented." Argued the SP "In that case, the police would have inevitably opened fire to control the situation. Imagine the bloodshed it would have caused." According to the SP, initial investigations have revealed that the jawans had carried out the rampage under the orders of the area commander, and two JCOs and a captain were supervising the operation.

The police subsequently registered two cases against the jawans on the basis of FIRs filed by Jaspal Singh and GRP officials. The army authorities too filed an FIR with the police in a clear bid to shield its men and thwart police action against the guilty. What is more, the FIR filed by Major Balkishan on behalf of the army has given the incident a communal colour.

According to Major Balkishan's version 17 jawans of the Sikh Light Infantry, who were going on leave, were seated inside a compartment of the Lalgarh-Ambala passenger train. One of the jawans accidentally hit one of his colleagues while getting off the train to see his relative. Soon, the two jawans came to blows. A crowd gathered around them and raised slogans like, 'Kill the Sardars, burn the Sardars'. And, when one of the jawans tried to pacify them, he was manhandled.

The FIR goes on to add that a jawan managed to get out of the compartment and inform his unit. Subsequently, 20 jawans under the command of a captain was despatched to tackle the situation. But as soon as the party reached the railway station, they were accosted by an angry crowd and beaten up. All this while the people raised provocative and communal slogans. The army jawans however managed to rescue the Sikhs among the army men. They were later admitted to the railway hospital with injuries. The FIR categorically denies that the army jawans resorted to violence of any kind.

But the army's version obviously found few takers. The people are convinced that the army jawans are a drunken and indiscipline lot and on 4 July they struck unprovoked.

Milap Chand Dandia/Jaipur

Made in India: The Challenge

Excerpts from the speech of Shri J.N. Sapru, Chairman, I.T.C. Limited, at the 78th Annual General Meeting held on 27.6.1989.



Shri J.N. Sapru

THE INDIAN ECONOMY

Recent assessment of our economic progress indicates that in 1988-89 the growth in our Gross Domestic Product has been in excess of 11%, with agriculture growing at 20% and the industrial and service sectors growing at 8% each. This performance underscores the basic resilience and vigour of the Indian economy, which has emerged stronger even after successive droughts, and reflects favourably on the measures initiated by Government in recent years to encourage industrial and economic growth.

Despite the balance-of-payment crunch facing the country, the overall performance of the economy brings out the optimism in me. Having achieved the 'commanding heights' in the public sector, it is now time to pause, reflect and re-assess whether this good old order should not give way to the new.

The achievement of our objective of 6% growth in the Eighth Plan, enjoins on industry a growth commitment of 12%, coupled with at least a 10% growth in real terms of exports. We must actualise these aspirations, and take a significant step forward towards combating an old and tenacious adversary of our society—poverty. Indian industry will have to start becoming socially more responsive and internationally cost competitive.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Echoing the performance of the country's economy, your Company has completed another good year in terms of working results, posting a net income of Rs 364.36 crores, profit before tax of Rs 47.21 crores and profit after tax of Rs 29.20 crores.

On an annualised basis, the nine months' results reflect a 27.5% growth in net income and an increase of 33.5% and 57% in profit before tax and profit after tax, respectively. More than the returns in a particular year, it is the consistency of performance that more truly reflects the value of your Corporation. Your Board has thought it prudent to recommend a Dividend of 40% and capitalisation of reserves by issuance of Bonus Shares in the proportion of 1:1, subject to the approval of the Controller of Capital Issues.

The Report of the Directors gives you a fairly detailed view of the Company's performance. I will therefore dwell only on a few salient aspects that may be considered noteworthy.

1 Foreign Exchange

Your Company is one of the largest foreign exchange earners for the country in the private sector. Direct inflow of foreign exchange earnings of Rs 56.13 crores during this financial period reflects a 43% increase on an annualised basis and covers outflows five times. They also represent 15.4% of your net sales income.

2 Agri-businesses

Whilst all our business activities are progressing satisfactorily and continue to maintain their leadership, I am particularly happy to report the progress made by your Company's newest area of business activity. Different varieties of oilseeds under the brand name ADARSH have been enthusiastically received by the agricultural community in Andhra Pradesh and the market response to the SUNDROP range of cooking oils launched in the cities of Visakhapatnam, Madras, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Calcutta has been equally heartening. Significant progress has already been made in the development of hybrid seeds and I am pleased to advise that the Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, has accorded approval to your Company's Research & Development centre for oilseeds.

3 Punjab Anand Batteries Ltd (PABL)

At the behest of the Government of Punjab, your Company was invited to consider the revival of PABL. Under a Scheme of Rehabilitation approved by the Board for Industrial & Financial Reconstruction, your Company proposes to make an investment of

Rs 1.19 crores by subscribing for 11,90,000 shares of Rs 10 each for cash at par. This will bring your Company's shareholding to 50% and I recommend this for your approval. It will take a few years to nurse this Company back to a state of health but I am sure you will be happy with this mark of confidence in the management of your Company.

4. Family Welfare—FICCI Award

I am pleased to advise that, in recognition of our achievements and active participation for over two decades in the Government's Family Health and Welfare programme, your Company has been given the prestigious Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Award for 1988.

EXCISE

The present position with regard to our disputes with the Central Board of Excise & Customs, spanning a period of over 15 years, has been explained in detail in the Report of the Directors before you. The status of this issue remains as reported last year, except that the Government has now transferred the adjudication from the Director General of Anti-Evasion (Central Excise) to the Director General of Inspection and Audit (Customs & Central Excise) along with all other cases pertaining to the cigarette industry as a whole, pending resolution since 1973.

I take this opportunity to reiterate that your Company has not ever evaded excise duties, nor knowingly transgressed the law. In the opinion of your Directors, your Company accepts no further liabilities in respect of the disputed issues and will continue to take all appropriate steps for their early and satisfactory resolution.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Indications at the end of the first quarter reflect a very satisfactory growth over the record performance of last year. All our businesses continue to do well and, barring unforeseen circumstances, you can look forward to another year of improved performance.

MADE IN INDIA: THE CHALLENGE

The achievements these statistics reflect may make us sanguine, but we must not be

blinded into believing that we are on a natural growth escalator which will automatically take us to greater heights without much effort. We must address ourselves to two key issues, namely:

- i. Social Responsibility
- ii. International Cost competitiveness.

If we are to continue to 'breast the tape' in the years ahead, we must reorientate our purposes and strategies in the perspective of these two dimensions.

i. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is inextricably linked to the concept of cost competitiveness, for it is no more a mere matter of making random and token contributions to social causes. Social responsibility is an integral part of corporate strategy.

The very existence of enterprise cannot be justified on the basis that it is good for business. The existence of enterprise can only be justified on the basis that it is good for society. We exist by societal sanction and must, therefore, always integrate our objectives with the larger good of society, not as a measure of patronage, or even philanthropy, but in businesses' own enlightened self-interest.

The premier social responsibility of business is to make a profit, and profit is not a dirty word. Allow me to reiterate what I said last year, "Bankrupt businesses do not create a prosperous nation." The interests of our stakeholders and, in a more comprehensive sense, the health of our economy do depend on the profitability and productivity of our investments. Not to create a surplus is not only an irresponsible act but a crime against society, more especially in a developing country where capital is scarce and the compulsions of poverty are sometimes terrible but always compelling.

However, though profits are fundamental to a corporation being socially responsible, profiteering is anathema to the concept. We cannot therefore allow all 'responsibility', 'morality' and 'conscience' to lie in the invisible hand of an imperfect market system.

Your Company will continue to enact and implement measures in confirmation of its role as a 'responsible citizen' in its relationships with shareholders, business associates, suppliers, employees, customers, the Government and other relevant publics.

The courageous initiatives of the Government in unleashing the forces of growth and competition deserves reciprocal support

from industry. In this context your Corporation will always act with sensitivity and in conscience, being aware that a 'responsible citizen' is an integral part of being a 'good corporate citizen'.

ii. International Cost-competitiveness

Let us now shift the focus to the second issue. The delinking of currencies from fixed rates of exchange, two successive 'oil crises' and the emergence of new economic 'superpowers' and companies within them of international commercial salience rocked the old system, and underscored the basic interdependence of the world's economy. In the common pursuit of improving standards of living, and the quality of life, nations have started agglomerating into larger 'economic communities' to create an environment and circumstance where the relentless demand for better quality and lower costs can be satisfied. The strategic issues for corporations today are not only focussed on 'economies of scale' but also on 'economies of scope'. Throughout the world, corporations are readjusting their activities and perspectives in the context of the 'globalisation' of markets, financial resources, and production and manufacturing systems.

In India, thus far, we have remained relatively protected and have not as yet felt the invigorating challenge of international competition. We have often, therefore, rationalised and shown misplaced sympathy for incompetence and inefficiency. This has extorted its toll on our economy, and some times resulted in a high-cost, low-value addition circumstance, which has tended to short-change our own people. But as the future unfolds, it is unlikely that we can achieve our aspirations in terms of economic progress and remain estranged from the challenges and opportunities posed by global economic phenomena.

Time has come when we should reassess our thinking on regulations and reservations and instead give serious consideration to

development and growth, cost competitiveness and quality. We have created too many artificial antagonisms of large, medium, small and even tiny sectors in our economy, which we have tried to insulate from each other without quite appreciating their interdependence and complementarity, and the long-term consequences of protectionism.

We must develop our pride in 'Made in India', and this can only happen when we compete internationally on dimensions of cost and quality. Therefore, let us think of the efficient and the inefficient sectors rather than of the large, medium and small.

It is the contention that the same factors of production—men, machines, materials and money—and the same work-culture cannot successfully produce two different qualities, one for the internal market and yet another for the international market.

As business gets 'globalised', your Company will invest in contemporary technologies and techniques. It will create the necessary totality of 'culture' to meet new challenges to deliver internationally cost-competitive value uniformly to its customers. These measures will give a competitive edge to your Corporation.

ITC's strategic direction will be towards becoming an 'Indian International' in form and spirit and, in so doing, it will continue to generate returns to its stakeholders, and contribute to national wealth and the quality of life in the immediate and the longer time horizon.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let us recapitulate. Whereas we can derive satisfaction from progress made as a country and a Company, international economic changes are creating 'new horizons' of challenge and opportunity.

For nigh on to four score years the ITC story has been one of managing challenge and change. We now approach the 'new horizons' with confidence founded in our abilities, taking sustenance from our history.

The challenge we therefore face as industry leaders and must resolve to establish is our pride in the stamp—Made in India.

This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the 78th Annual General Meeting

For the full text of the speech, please write to: Corporate Public Relations Manager, I.T.C. Limited, Virginia House, 37 Chourringbee, Calcutta 700 071.



New horizons, new hopes.



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INDIAN LEAF TOBACCO DEVELOPMENT DIVISION



PACKAGING AND PRINTING DIVISION



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EXPORTS DIVISION



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BHADRACHALAM PAPERBOARDS LIMITED—AN ITC-PROMOTED ENTERPRISE

Betting on Pawar

What makes the Maharashtra CM indispensable to the Congress(I)?

Only a couple of months back, it seemed yet another chief minister of Maharashtra was on his way out, having fallen a victim to what has now become endemic among politicians of the state — land scandals. The odds were clearly weighed against Sharad Pawar, especially because former chief minister A.R. Antulay was hell-bent on removing Pawar. But Pawar managed to wriggle out of the tricky situation, thanks largely to the support extended to him by none other than Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Recently, at a rally in Nagpur, Rajiv Gandhi gave a clean chit to Pawar and warned those who were out to embarrass the chief minister. The Prime Minister made it clear that Sharad Pawar would call the shots in the state during the forthcoming parliamentary polls. What makes Pawar so indispensable to the Congress(I)?

Whatever be Sharad Pawar's shortcomings, everyone agrees that he is an able administrator and a canny politician who has rejuvenated the Congressmen of the state. After the ignominious exit of Antulay and Shivajirao Patil-Nilangekar, S.B. Chavan was despatched from Delhi to set matters right in Maharashtra. But, though a strict disciplinarian, Chavan was clearly not a man of the masses. Thus, he could do little to halt the swift inroads the BJP and the Shiv Sena were making in Maharashtra. It was during his regime that the Congress(I) was humiliated by

Whatever be Sharad Pawar's shortcomings, even his critics admit that he is an able administrator and a canny politician

the Shiv Sena in the Vile-Parle Assembly byelections.

But Pawar, as soon as he took over the reins of the state a year ago, took a number of bold decisions. The privatisation of roads, incentives for the state's industry and new schemes for farmers are only some of the steps that made the chief minister immensely popular with the masses. Soon, he was portrayed as a dynamic leader and able administrator.

However, Pawar made a couple of serious political blunders which tarnished his image. One was the appointment of Suresh Kalmadi as the chairman of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC). To make matters worse, Pawar amended the government's land policy and transferred land to the MTDC. This created the impression that Kalmadi was collecting funds for Pawar. The chief minister's critics utilised the opportunity to demand his removal from the chief ministership. Sharad Pawar somehow survived with the support of the Prime Minister.

But there are more important political reasons for Rajiv Gandhi to pin his hopes on Pawar. The Maharashtra *bandh* organised in early July proved that the BJP Shiv Sena combine is a force to reckon with in Maharashtra politics. And Pawar, according to the Congress(I) high command, is the only politician in Maharashtra who can counter the growing influence of the duo. Moreover, after the death of Vasantdada Patil, Maharashtra politics is bereft of popular Congress leaders. Vilasrao Deshmukh may be a promising Congressman with a grassroots base but he is no match for Pawar's charisma or political acumen. In a way, Sharad Pawar is the only Congressman in the state to have inherited Dada Patil's mantle. No wonder Rajiv Gandhi has turned a deaf ear to Pawar's critics.

Sharad Pawar's fight against communal forces in the state has even earned him the admiration of the Janata Dal. Though Dal leaders will not admit it publicly, they actually supported the Congress (I)'s opposition to the BJP-Shiv Sena sponsored *bandh* in July.

Little wonder then that Sharad Pawar is riding high. But he has too many enemies within the Congress(I) who are out to embarrass him at the slightest opportunity. With the elections round the corner, any effort to dislodge Pawar will weaken the Congress(I) in Maharashtra. And Antulay will only be happy to see the fall of his arch rival. The Congress(I) high command should warn Antulay and, better still, give him organisational work. After all, an idle brain is a devil's workshop. ■

Sharad Pawar: riding high



I'M
NOT
SCARED!



Ring in the new

The government gears up to introduce hi-tech into Indian villages. Will its plan work out?

Imagine this scenario. The village *panchayat* meets under the old *pepal* tree, with the *pradhan* occupying pride of place. In front of him, instead of the piles of land records and petitions, there is a huge screen linked to a personal computer. The *pradhan* operates the system. In what seems like magic to the villagers the screen comes alive with a neat colour graph of all the demands they had placed at the office of the *pradhan* or the district magistrate.

Then the *pradhan* punches in a series of 'what if' sequences into the computer. What if the proposal for repairing the primary school is replaced with that of building a bus stand? Wouldn't it be better if more villagers got employment through a road construction programme rather than spend that money on holding the annual village fair? As the villagers begin an animated discussion on the options before them, the *pradhan* punches the button which flashes on screen the total budget available for the developmental projects of the village, and the funds sanctioned under the newly-introduced Jawahar Rozgar Yojana.

The computer does the rest of the thinking. It produces a list of projects in which the cost equals the allocation given by the government to the village. The choice, the *pradhan* informs the gathering can be made on the basis of the number of people who will benefit from a particular scheme. Except for some of the older men, most other villagers and members of the *panchayat* seem satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. The meeting over, the *pradhan*, instead of going to the office of the district magistrate, walks up to the other prized possession of the village: a telephone booth. He calls the DM, informing him about the *panchayat* meeting and then phones the local bank, asking for the release of money from the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana fund. Work done with, the *pradhan* is now free to go home.

This is, roughly, the grand scheme Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his Cabinet colleagues have dreamed up for micro-level rural development once the ambitious Panchayati Raj and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana programmes are brought

into effect at the macro-level. Massive technological inputs are being planned by the government with the emphasis being placed, not so much on the individuals who run the district administration, but on building up a systems network which will take rural India to the threshold of the 21st century.

This move, say the progenitors of the scheme, is a step towards decentralisation, not centralisation. Says Mani Shankar Aiyar, joint secretary in the Prime Minister's office (PMO): "The Prime Minister is as keen as putting computers in every village as he is in getting a computer into my office. But just like I have resisted getting a computer, there are bound to be others who will too. Still, these are the genius formulas of Rajiv Gandhi which will eventually change the face of rural India."

The first target has been set in the telecommunications sector by the Prime Minister. At a recent meeting of the parliamentary consultative committee of the communications ministry, Rajiv Gandhi, who chaired the meeting disclosed that he would 'soon' want at least one public telephone in each of the 2,17,300 *panchayats* of the country. This is a tall order for those running the communications network, which presently accounts for only 30,000 telephone connections in various village *panchayats*.

The onus of achieving this has been placed on the flamboyant Sam Pitroda, head of the Centre for Development of Technology (C-DOT), who now doubles as chairman of the Telecom Commission. Pitroda hopes to meet the target of installing a phone in every village by the end of the Eighth Five Year Plan (that is,

Villagers use the newly-installed telephone: pride of possession



in 1990). He told SUNDAY: "There is a terrible imbalance in the telecommunications sector. People have a mental block for taking technology to the villages. There are 10 per cent telephones in 75 per cent of the area of the country. The entire north-east has only 50,000 telephone lines. We have to end these disparities and make telephone lines the highways to development."

However, says Pitroda, there are some who ridicule the concept of taking technology to the villages. Especially since at one level it is said that water and electricity are more urgent requirements, and on the other, that communication is as important for villagers as health programmes and child development. Such dichotomies, he feels, can be removed if planners get down to specifics, and work out a parallel policy of development.

Pitroda cites the example of Kittur, a 'test' village in Karnataka where a 128-line rural automatic exchange (RAX) was installed in 1986. "Traders and even truck drivers of the village told me that their turnover had doubled since the telephone exchange was installed," he says. One hundred such RAX systems have been installed in villages so far and as an effusive Pitroda puts it, "telephones are bringing about an environmental change in the villages".



Computers are supposed to be an integral part of the Panchayati Raj programme. Since the responsibility for its implementation lies with the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), which includes district magistrates, initiation programmes were held all over the country. While these were well received in Congress(I)-ruled states, they met with a lukewarm reception elsewhere. In Bangalore, for instance, the government's efforts came to nought, thanks to a poor turnout of IAS officers.

At these courses, the participants were given a detailed paper on countryside computerisation and shown a video film on how computers can bridge the information gap in village-level administration. In the film, minister of state for home and personnel affairs, P. Chidambaram gives his reasons for the failure of the district administration: "Today raw data continues to flow into the office of the district magistrate or the collector. They have 100 files on their table but no method by which they can monitor the information or access all the files at the same time." On the issue of village-level computerisation, the minister says: "I find anyone who has put in 5-10 years in the administration responding well. Anyone who has put in more than 20-25 years might be reluctant to take up any fresh challenges."

At present, experts in the fields of rural development and computerisation are in touch with the ministry of rural development and the National Informa-

The attempts to introduce computerisation in rural areas have not really taken off. At best, the plans of setting up a computer in every village remain at a conceptual stage

tics Centre (NIC), the government's nodal agency for computerisation, to create pilots for the village computerisation programme. Among those advising the government are Professor R.S. Gangapaty of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and Professor R. Jayashankar from the National Management Programme. Software packages which could be used for the programme have already been forwarded to the government.

Professor Jayashankar explains that while the Rs 2,500 crores sanctioned for

the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana is basically meant to generate employment and for the creation of other productive assets, a computer can act as an expert system to help in deciding between various Yojana projects. Says he: "For the first time the village *pradhans* have an occasion to independently decide on how they should spend the money. The computer will also help in monitoring the progress of the projects."

While it may take decades before a computer is actually installed in every village, the groundwork for this scheme has already been completed by the NIC and other agencies. The first effort at evolving a district-level computerisation system was made by Computers Maintenance Corporation (CMC). The CMC, in 1981, proposed installing a VAX mainframe computer in every district. These systems were to be imported. After some deliberation, the CMC's proposal was replaced by two ambitious programmes of the NIC, which was then under the Department of Technology (DOT). (Today it is an autonomous body under the Planning Commission.)

Both programmes of the NIC were activated over three years ago. But the computer culture has yet to percolate down to the grassroots level because only 238 districts have been connected by computer. Even among these, very few systems are operational today. However, feels Dr Jayashankar, the dream of linking every village by computer wouldn't remain so distant once district-level networking was completed by the NIC.

Even in the past, the government has promised to bring about technological revolution in the country. The former communications minister, Arjun Singh, had pledged to take cordless telephones into every village. But fortunately for Rajiv Gandhi, the ever-optimistic Sam Pitroda now heads the Telecom Commission.

Nonetheless, the system is not fool-proof. At Simbholi, in Ghaziabad district, where a RAX was installed, part of the system got burnt out, because some overhead electricity lines fell on the telephone cables, causing a short circuit. Even when the system is functional, the lines work intermittently. Maintenance and service of the automatic system has its own difficulties.

Considering the problems the programme is running into at this incipient stage, one shudders to think what pitfalls it will encounter once it really gets underway.

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

The art of diplomacy

Former IFS officer and at present minister of state for external affairs, Natwar Singh seems to have perfected it

Natwar Singh has demonstrated his capacity for surviving in a ministry (external affairs) that has seen good men leave before they could unpack

Few ministers in Rajiv Gandhi's government can claim association with one particular job. The Prime Minister has seen to it that his ministers do not get too comfortably ensconced in any particular office and, to ensure this, he has reshuffled his ministry over two dozen times in the past four and a half years. The survivors in a ministry are rare and therefore notable. Among them is the low-profile, high-brow minister of state for external affairs, Natwar Singh, a man whom colleagues, at one time, considered an inconsequential lightweight.

Singh, however, has proved to be of more solid stuff than presumed. He has demonstrated his capacity for surviving in a ministry that has seen good men leave before they could unpack. Rajiv Gandhi's personal interest in the conduct of foreign policy is perhaps greatly responsible for the frequency with which ministers have come and gone from the sombre, stone-walled offices of South Block, which houses the external affairs ministry.

The list of ministers who have briefly pretended to chart Indian foreign policy is long and distressing. The ministry was initially headed for almost 11 months by Rajiv Gandhi himself; when the going got tough, the Prime Minister brought in Baliram Bhagat as a full-fledged minister. Bhagat lasted for 7 months and 17 days. He was succeeded by Shiv Shankar, who was out in just 6 months and 10 days. Next in line was Narain Dutt Tiwari, who had to be given a major portfolio. He got the MEA (ministry for external affairs), but was shunted out in 6 months. The Prime Minister again took over in July 1987 and continued for almost a year before relinquishing charge to P.V. Narasimha Rao, who remains in office but does precious little regarding actual policy formulation or implementation.

The casualty list of junior MEA ministers is even longer. First was R.N. Mirdha, who lasted for just two months. Next came A.A. Rahim, who also stayed for only two months. Then came Khurshid Alam Khan, who managed to stick on for 9 months and 25 days. His successor, K.R. Narayan, lasted a little longer—for 12 months and 27 days. Eduardo Faleiro, the Congress(I) MP from Goa, had a surprisingly long innings: 28 months and 19 days. Professor K.K. Tewari, who attained notoriety for his colourful turn of speech, was inducted in June 1988, but in

April this year, he was moved to the information and broadcasting ministry where his vocal talents may be better utilised.

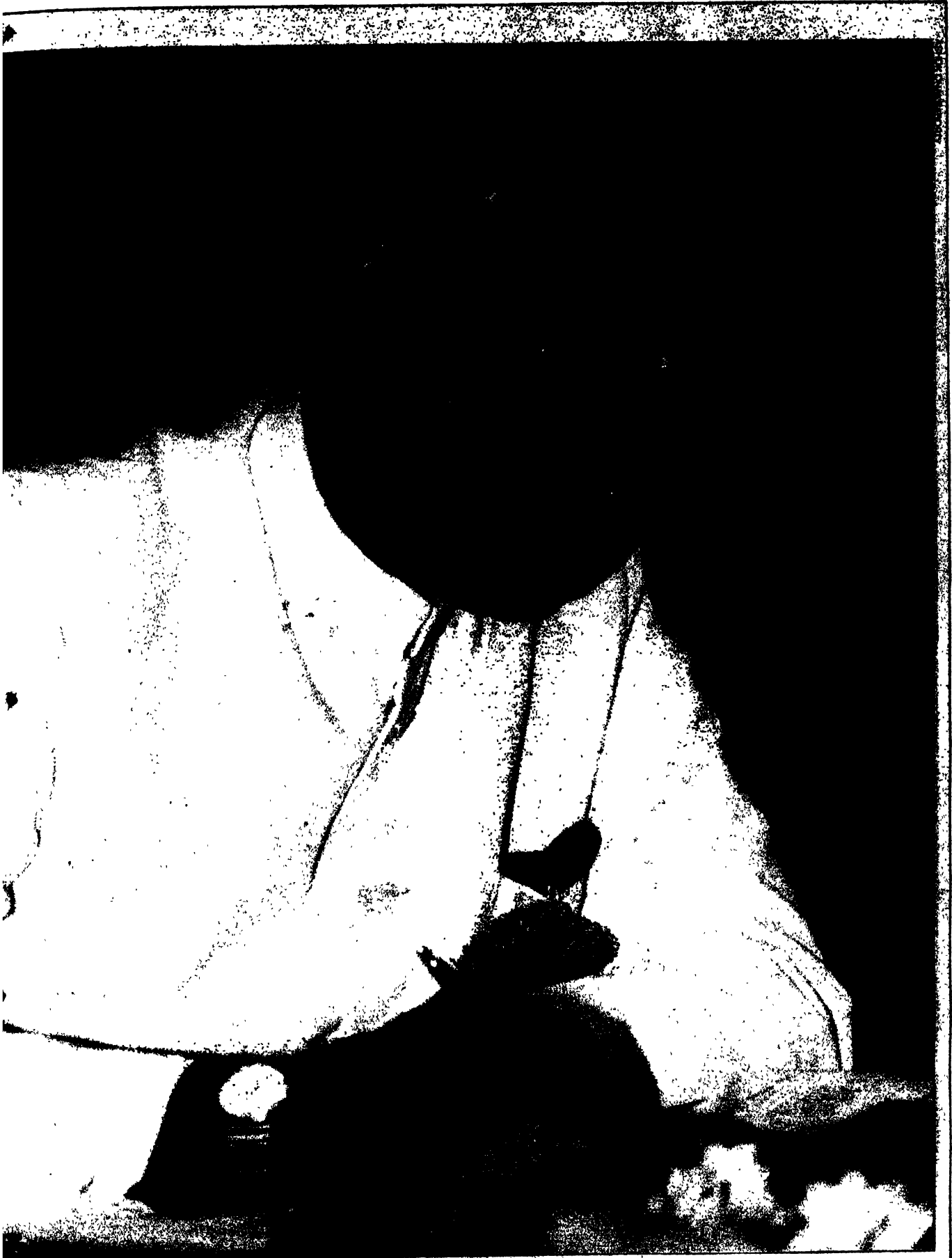
NATWAR SINGH, in contrast, shows no signs of moving on. He has been there since October 1986. His first ministerial assignment was in steel and mines. He was later shifted to the MEA, despite strong objections from many of his powerful former foreign service colleagues. Singh, his detractors initially claimed, had no business being minister in the MEA. Before quitting the service, he had been a peripheral secretary (east) in the ministry and was not even in the running for the top job of foreign secretary. Now, feared his former colleagues, the diminutive diplomat would return to lord over them. The objection was, however, not sustained and has proved unfounded.

The minister of state for external affairs has kept his reserve and his job. Not difficult perhaps for a man who describes his favourite pastime as: "Good conversation followed by prolonged periods of reflective silence."

THE NEGOTIATIONS with the players involved in the Kampuchean tangle were his baby. Singh achieved a major breakthrough by convincing Prince Norodom Sihanouk to agree to talks with the Marxist Heng Samrin regime.

Singh also has a say in India's Pakistan policy. Having been ambassador to Pakistan and a hardliner, Singh's opinions are given considerable weightage. More recently, he has been given the delicate task of monitoring border talks with China. He accompanied the Prime Minister to Beijing and was present at all the important meetings. Not bad going for a scholarly, backroom boy, who had initially made a name for himself through his literary efforts—six books and several articles—and his close association with the great novelist E.M. Forster.

Today, Natwar Singh has more demanding preoccupations. Apart from attending to the nitty-gritty of foreign policy implementation, he has to nurse his Bharatpur Lok Sabha constituency. When he is not in office, he is busy receiving the steady stream of visitors from Bharatpur. It's an arduous life. Wonder when he gets time for his favourite pastime. ■



Success does funny things to people. Juhi Chawla, for instance, is turning into a cleanliness freak. Why else would every caller be told that Madam was in the bathroom?

Squeaking clean she might be, but the faintly antiseptic air around her isn't enough to camouflage her manners, which, going by general consensus, stink.

Take the way she treats journalists, for one. One hapless gentleman, who went to interview Ms Chawla was made to cool his heels outside her highrise for hours altogether, before Madam gave him permission to enter. And even then, there was no sign of the heroine. The press person was informed by a lowly minion that Juhi could only see him after 45 minutes or so.

And no, there were no apologies offered.

It's amazing what one film with Amitabh Bachchan will do to the likes of Kimi Katkar.

These days the buxom



Kimi Katkar: riding high

beauty doesn't deign to report on the sets on time. Household sources have it that Madam does not wake before 11 o'clock, and troops in for a 9 am shift a good four hours late. Of necessity her second shift is thrown out of gear too.

If any producer is foolish enough to draw Ms Katkar's



Juhi Chawla: Ms Antiseptic attention to the inconvenience caused, he is firmly ticked off for his pains. Kimi informs him curtly that she is not a junior artiste, and will not be talked to in that manner.

Perhaps it's time somebody told the lady that she might not remain an artiste, junior or otherwise, much longer if she continues in this vein.



Dharmendra was ill. Running a temperature of 103 degrees. Nonetheless, he reported on time for the shooting of Jadish Sidana's *Sherdil*.

True professionalism? Not really. This conscientiousness had more to do with the fact that Garam Dharam was shooting with old flame, Anita Raaj. And sure enough, when the two met sparks flew yet again, helped, no doubt, by the fact that they had to perform some sizzling love scenes, in the first schedule.

Dharmendra; (Inset) Anita Raaj: touching reunion



Guess who was most happy at this touching reunion? No, not the besotted pair. It was producer-director Sidana who was hard put to believe his luck. After all, who'd ever heard of a hero shooting in the event of an illness, however minor?

Who had ever thought that things would come to such a sorry pass that Rekha would have to make do with Dimple Kapadia's leavings.

No, the sultry Ms Ganesan is not Sunny Deol's latest amour. She's merely replaced Dimple in Sunil Dutt's film *Yeh Aag Kab Bhujegi*.



Rekha: making do with left-overs

Dutt campwallahs maintain that the replacement took place because Dimple didn't have the required dates. But that doesn't ring true. Not in the light of rumours that the heroine and the director had disagreements over Kapadia's price. And considering Dimple's track record (she's had similar problems with Subhash Ghai for *Karma*, Tinnu Anand for *Shahenshah* and Sattee Shourie for *Farishtey*) this doesn't seem unlikely.

Of course, as always, there is a more interesting version going around as well. This has it that Sunjay Dutt was behind the change over. Apparently, the junkie-eyed Sunju is yet to be completely over Rekha and thought this was the best possible chance of rekindling old fires. ■

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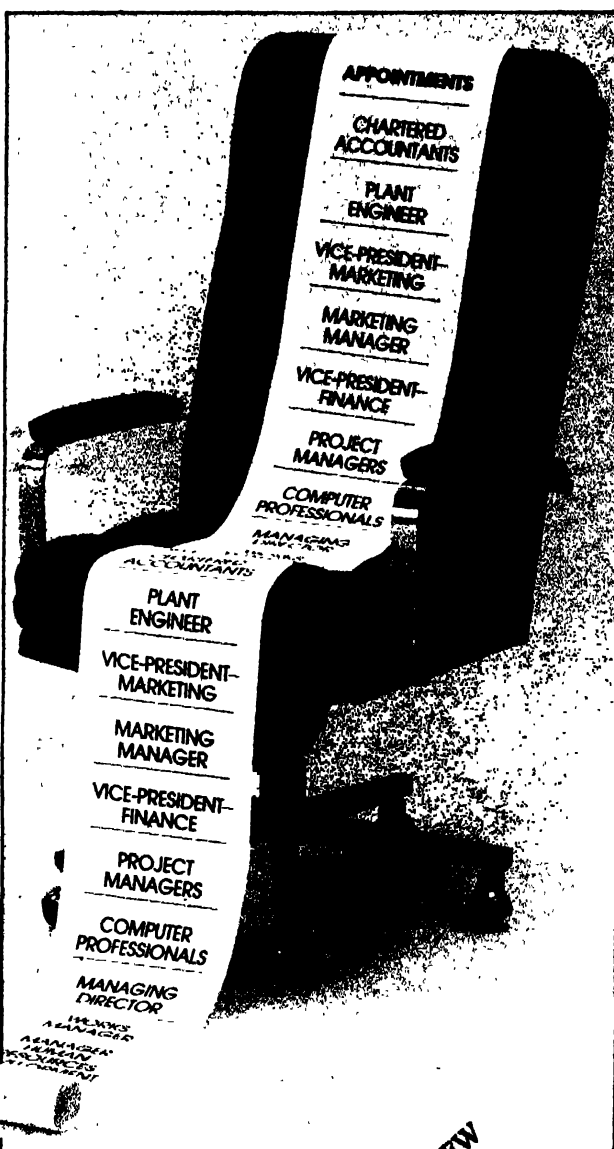
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THE ALL-NEW

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TAKE AN ALL-NEW LOOK AT BUSINESS.

Shuttle time with Padukone

● *Television is fast becoming the last resort of the past-it sportsman. The latest to take recourse to the tube, once playing days were done with: badminton ace Prakash Padukone.*

With such triumphs as the All-England win (at Wembley) behind him, Padukone has decided that it's time to "retire gracefully" from the court. And, instead, occupy himself with tutoring impressionable young things in the finer points of the game in a serial called Shuttle Time With Prakash



Prakash Padukone: retiring gracefully

Padukone. Each half-hour episode (scheduled for a Sunday morning slot) will have Prakash demonstrating the right way of going about things. This, interspersed with interviews with all-time greats such as Llem Swie King and Morten Frost Hansen.

Doordarshan being the great leveller, Padukone is facing the same problems any other TV producer would. At present, he is engaged in a desperate bid to cope with Mandi House red-tapism, while scouring the horizons for a sponsor. Any takers?

Once a Congressman...

● *Why did Arif Mohammad Khan suddenly decide to hang a portrait of Indira Gandhi on the walls of his office? Did this presage his return to the Congress(I)?*

Wrong, says Arif Mohammad. Malicious nonsense. Motivated Congress(I) disinformation. The picture which led to all that speculation had never been off his walls in the first place. Arif



RAY, BATRA

Chandra Swami: an industry of spiritual help

Tale of two Sultans

● Chandra Swami never tires of making out that, the richest man in the world, the Sultan of Brunei, was his devoted disciple. There's one slight snag, though. The Sultan thinks differently.

In By God's Will, his biography by Lord Chalfont (the first Western writer and

television person to be granted access to the Sultan and his close friends), the ruler of Brunei is dismissive of the godman's claims. "Why should I, a Muslim," he asks, "seek advice from the Swami, who is a Hindu? The Swami was introduced to me some time ago, but that is the full extent of my contact with him."

The book has more on the Sultan of Sleaze, Chandra Swami, whom Lord Chalfont describes as "one of a string of Indian gurus who have made selfless spiritual help a multi-million dollar industry". Apparently, Chandra Swami's talents did not extend to operating a tape recorder correctly. For, the transcripts of the tape he sold to 'Tiny' Rowland which had Egyptian businessman Mohamed Al Fayed (who tried to buy out Harrods) discussing his relationship with the Sultan "read like the gibberings of three certified lunatics".

The Sultan of Brunei: no disciple of Chandra Swami's





Arif Mohammad Khan: victim of disinformation

disclosed that he still regarded himself as a true Congressman and continued to revere Mrs Gandhi. It was only "back-stabber" Rajiv whom he found impossible to accept as his leader. Hence the departure from the ruling party.

Humbug

● If one went by the British tabloid *News of the World*, Benazir Bhutto was being spied upon. The Pakistani Prime Minister's hotel room at the Ritz, London, had been bugged, disclosed the paper, and her conversations recorded, presumably to be used against her in the future. But, luckily for Bhutto, now on her first state visit to the United Kingdom, the device was discovered by the ever-vigilant Scotland Yard and de-activated.

No such luck, said Benazir, when asked to comment on the story. Though it would have been fun if something as exciting as this had



Benazir Bhutto: unfazed

happened. As it turned out, the report was just a lot of humbug.

Bhutto, as usual, had

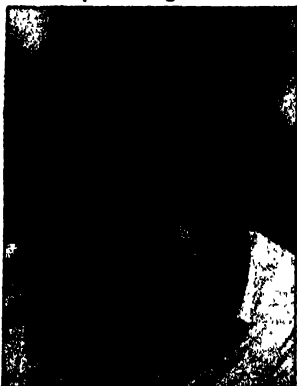
the last word: "A lot of people read the *News of the World*, but does anybody believe it?"

More on padayatras

● Guess who are all set to do a Shahabuddin? None other than cricketing legend Sunil Gavaskar and cine star Rishi Kapoor.

No, they aren't going all out to safeguard

Rishi Kapoor: religious fervour



the Babri Masjid for their Muslim brethren. It's the fate of an ISKCON temple that's got them all hot under the collar.

The local council of Watford, England, has ruled that the Bhakti Vedanta Manor, an ISKCON shrine, may not be used by devotees as a place of public worship. Brimming over with righteous indignation, ISKCON decided to

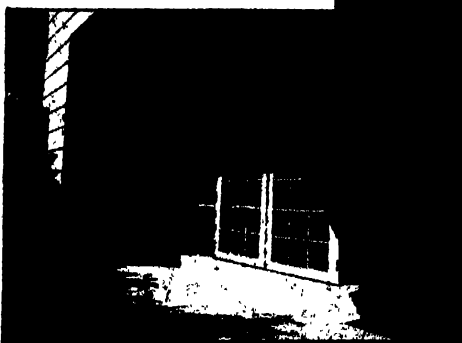


Sunil Gavaskar: from health food to piety

organise a protest march of 2,000 devotees. And carried away by religious fervour, no doubt, Gavaskar and Kapoor decided to lead the *padayatra*.

Well, at least, it makes for a pleasant change. From endorsing health food in Sunny's case, to brooding on the sad fall of the Barrymores—the Raj Kapoors—of Indian filmdom, where Rishi is concerned.

HAVE MONEY



A Salt Lake residence: the new modernism meets the old



Jewellery: all that glitters is black

Bombay's La Brasserie:
the deluxe hotels are still
trying new cuisine



*New
wealth and
conspicuous
consumption
transform urban
Indian life*



WILL SPEND

Say it loud: I'm rich and proud. Four decades after the Mahatma, Rajiv Gandhi's India has finally junked the cult of austerity. Gone is the self-denial of old. In its place is an aggressive acquisitiveness. Gone too is the old Indian propensity to save—down to 22 per cent of income last year from the traditional 24-25 per cent. The buzz-words of today are spend, spend, spend. And the credo is: when in doubt don't presume: consume!

Statisticians say that 10 million Indians

first time in the history of India, conspicuous consumption has reached epidemic proportions. Says Surjit Bhalla, senior fellow at the Policy Group, a Delhi think-tank, "After a comparatively slow process, the incomes of the rich have suddenly reached credible international standards." There has also been a shift in the kind of person making the money. Whereas earlier, consumption at the top end of the market was restricted to the upper-middle class and the traditional industrial class, the spending power is now in the hands of a new intermediate class which has recently made money: entrepreneurs, traders and retailers. Explains Bhalla, "With economic growth, certain sections are increasing their incomes faster than other sectors. It is neither good nor bad but merely inevitable and predictable."

The salaried middle class, of course, does not see it that way. Because the new money is in the hands of those who do not necessarily subscribe to the values and tastes of the westernised, educated elite, whole new consumer industries have sprung up from Maruti accessories to designer bathroom tiles. To the traditional elite, this is evidence of vulgarity and tastelessness. But as those with the big bucks might well retort: it is better to be *nouveau* than not *riche* at all.

The emergence of the new money has also coincided with two other significant trends, both of which have to do with Rajiv Gandhi. Says Bhalla, "In the post-Rajiv period, it is not considered immoral to make money. The guilt earlier associated with making money has now gone. Businessmen, consequently, are much less guilt-ridden. And this is being expressed as conspicuous consumption." In other words, when your Prime Minister likes Lacoste tee-shirts, Gucci loafers and Christian Dior sunglasses, the nation follows suit.

The Rajiv regime has also made a more tangible difference. Its economic and industrial policies have assisted in the creation of a consumer goods sector that is based both on new indigenously manufactured items and on newly liberalised imports. Adds Bhalla, "Earlier, even if people increased their incomes, there were only so many ways of spending money or showing off wealth.

have incomes in excess of Rs four lakhs a year. And economists caution that even this might be an underestimate; all income statistics are necessarily suspect. The high level of concealed income suggests that hundreds of crores of rupees drain back into the market mopping up goods and services while escaping from the tax man.

The evidence is all around us. Luxury goods have never been as freely available as they are today—and never before have they been this expensive. Houses in previously unfashionable Delhi colonies change hands for upwards of Rs 60 lakhs. Meals in such smart restaurants as the Rotisserie at Bombay's The Oberoi can cost as much as Rs 12,000 for two. And high-fashion garments at such shops as Ravissant and Ensemble can cost Rs 15,000 for a gown.

Despite the high prices, there is no shortage of consumers. Delhi is currently experiencing a building boom; new pricier restaurants open each day; and Indian *couture* is the growth industry of the late Eighties.

The conclusion is inescapable. For the



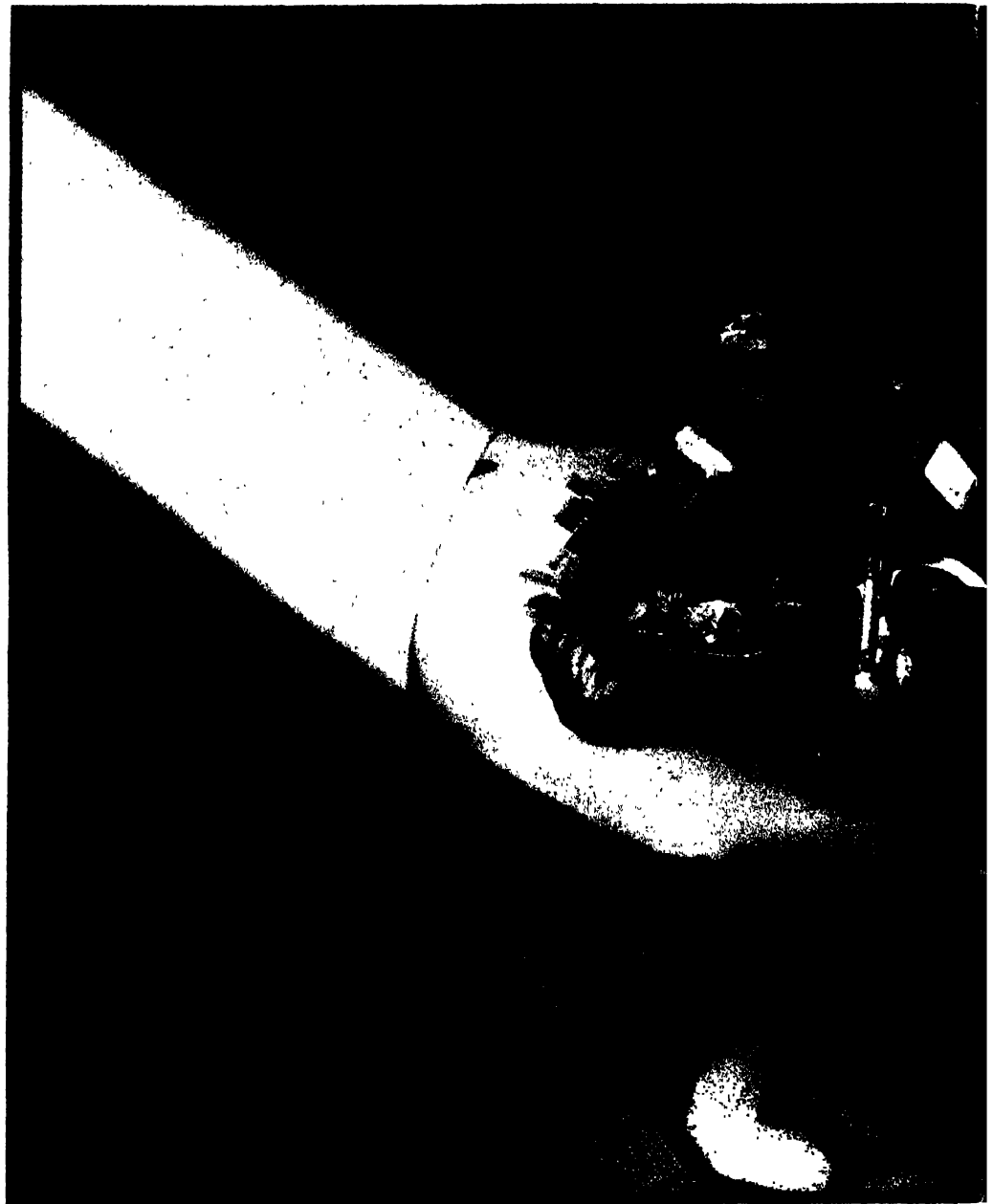
Delhi's growing market



High fashion: money for nothing?

GALIMPA/PAIRE

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Dunlop introduces the widest two-wheeler tyre in the country: Spectra-Wide.

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The logo features the Dunlop brand name in a bold, italicized sans-serif font, preceded by a stylized arrowhead symbol. Below this, the words 'SPECTRA-WIDE' are written in a very large, bold, blocky font with a thick black outline and a slight 3D effect. At the bottom, in a smaller, plain sans-serif font, is the tagline 'THE WIDEST TYRE FOR SCOOTERS AND MOTORCYCLES.'

DUNLOP
SPECTRA-WIDE
THE WIDEST TYRE FOR SCOOTERS AND MOTORCYCLES.

STATUS SYMBOLS

Forget about Rolls Royces and Belugas. Here's what counts these days:

- Any Japanese car, preferably a Toyota;
- Paintings by A.E. Menon, M. F. Husain or Manjit Bawa;
- 'Saries' by S. Paul;
- Gem-encrusted sunglasses, false nails and coloured contact lenses;
- Being greeted by your name by either Nelson Wang or the ghazal singer at

Bombay's Ensemble: so what if an outfit costs as much as a Maruti?



Now the choices have increased significantly. Everybody who builds a bathroom needs tiles. But only now does he have the option of designer tiles or marble flooring."

PUNJABI BAROQUE AND BANIA BYZANTINE

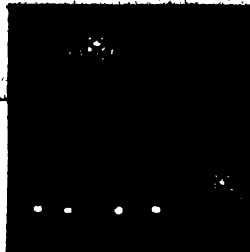
The consequence of all this has been an unprecedented boom in high-priced goods and services from tandoori restaurants to stereo systems for Marutis to gold jewellery. But nowhere is the new money more visible than in the housing sector.

If an Englishman's home is his castle, then, these days, a rich Indian's residence is his status symbol. In Delhi, the urge to keep up with the Junejas has spawned a whole new school of housing design that architect Gautam Bhatia disparagingly refers to as "Punjabi baroque". In Bombay, entire apartments have been transformed into marbled and wood-panelled creations that could easily double for Blofeld's headquarters in any James Bond film. In Calcutta, the eastern suburb of Salt Lake, once earmarked for middle class housing, has fallen prey to the developers who sell houses created

TAPAN DAS



Never before have the Indian rich found it so easy to buy goods that make their lives easier. From cookers to chandeliers—it's all on sale



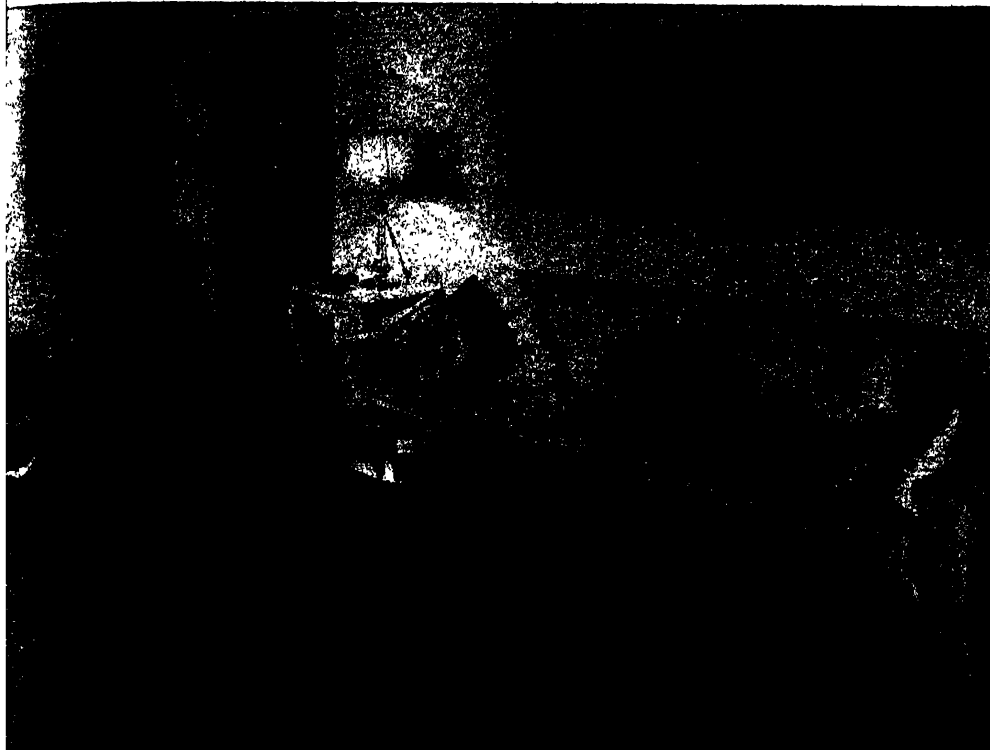
in a style that can only be described as 'Marwari modernism'. And, even in Bangalore, the new motto seems to be: bizarre is better.

Architects have learnt to cater to the new boom. Says Anil Verma, an award-winning Delhi architect, "I used to think that everything should be in good taste.

But then, what the hell? There is something called freedom of expression." Such egalitarian principles have a sound commercial basis. Explains another architect, "It is difficult to survive on snobbery. It is the neo-rich who have caused this boom and no architect can afford to turn his nose up at these people."

In Delhi, the new creativity finds expression in such recent developments as Greater Kailash, where it is not unusual to find traces of the Spanish villa, a touch of Gothic, a dash of Byzantine, a bit of the *haveli* and the odd echo of a Moghul mausoleum—in the same house. In Calcutta, the current status symbol in Salt Lake is the overhead water tank or pond. Ideally, this should take the form of a large, cement lotus on the roof. Other Salt Lake houses have extravagantly arched windows, simulated hanging gardens and huge domes. One bungalow is even constructed on a chariot (as in the Konark sun temple) with stone horses seemingly pulling it across a sea of concrete waves.

In Bangalore, a manufacturer of PVC pipes has plastered his newly-constructed two-storey house (inside and outside) with wallpaper. Thus, diffe-

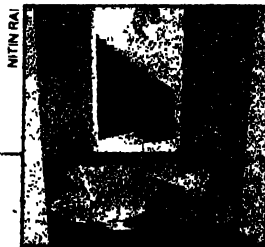


- Aangan;**
- A farmhouse on the outskirts of Delhi (marble-tiled swimming pool optional);
 - Weight reduction at Jindal;
 - A beach house at Alibag or Mandwa;
 - Gold-plated Pan Parag boxes;
 - Black Label scotch (more Black Label is consumed in India alone than Johnny Walker's total production);
 - Cartier cigarettes;
 - An astroturf lawn.

Expensive interior: furniture shops are raking it in

rent walls may carry pictures of cascading waterfalls, dense rain forests or sandy beaches. Also in Bangalore is the residence of cement baron M.S. Ramaiah which has all the trappings of a Hindi film set—stuffed tigers, wall-to-wall mirrors, enormous curving staircases, etc.—the house is still under construction, even though it has given its name (Gokula) to the entire neighbourhood. Legend has it that Ramaiah believes that if the house is ever finished, his luck will change.

The stylistic chaos that typifies the new building boom has much to do with the rootlessness of those who pay the bills. In the process of moving up, most of the new conspicuous consumers have sought to turn their backs on the homes they grew up in. Instead, they have searched for reference points in their new lives. Generally, these tend to be five-star hotels and Hindi movies. Argues Malvika Singh, editor of *The India Magazine*: "It is reassuring for the traditional elite to see this as a breakdown of values and a lack of culture. What it really amounts to is simple urban confusion. They are not sure what to copy. So what? It may be bizarre but it is vibrant."



The humble bathroom has now been transformed into a style emporium with jacuzzis, marble tubs and the inevitable designer tiles



Singh's 'urban confusion' is perhaps best captured by the craze for farmhouses on the outskirts of Delhi. Nobody does any farming and the structures themselves merge English countryside influences with Malibu chic and hacienda design. The advertising brags about this cross-cultural potpourri. For

instance: "Beverly Hills, the farmhouse you always dreamed about...based on lines similar to those of an English countryside."

Confesses Anil Verma, "The only way to deter a client with a truly bizarre suggestion is to tell him, "You know, this style will soon be out-of-date." That usually works.

MEN WITH STYLE VS MEN WITH TILES?

While the entire decoration industry is experiencing an unprecedented boom, the shrine of the new conspicuous consumption is clearly the bathroom. In Delhi, the

Design Shop specialises in bathroom fittings: sinks, commodes, bidets, squatting pans, handcrafted soap trays, elegant toilet-roll holders, fancy towel hooks and inevitable designer tiles. All are available in a variety of colours ("Thirty captivating shades—lush forest greens, warm sunshine yellows, bright sky-blues...") and some have patterns (golden flowers on coffee-coloured WCs are, apparently, a particular favourite).

The Design Shop's specialities, however, are saunas and jacuzzi whirlpools. While jacuzzis cost between Rs



Bombay's Khyber, kebabs to king.

TANDOORI DAYS

HOW TO FEED THE CONSPICUOUS CONSUMER

■ John Lennon and Paul McCartney were wrong when they told us that money can't buy love: on the arranged marriage circuit *anything* is possible. What they should have said is that money can't buy fame. That, sadly, is the central problem of most CCs (conspicuous consumers). What is the point having crores if you still wait 45 minutes for a table at the *Ménage à Trois*? Or if they blackball you at the Delhi Gymkhana? What you need is the kind of place that respects your money; that recognises that you are a *somebody*.

Don't sneer: this is a legitimate business opportunity for the right entrepreneur. The first to spot it was Frankie Lok, manager of Delhi's House of Ming. Lok created a 'favoured table area' and would only seat high-rollers (whom he would address by name) there if they let him order their food. ("Anyway, Frankie, you know best, *yaar*.") He would obligingly serve up Sino-Ludhiana fare but would make them pay through their noses for it.

Frankie's spiritual heir is Nelson Wang, owner of Bombay's China Garden. Recognising that once you've won over the CC's ego, his wallet and credit card will follow, Wang has assiduously massaged the self-esteem of his clientele. In the process, he has turned China Garden into India's most successful restaurant. A more recent venture has been the dingy Piano Bar.

Wang has many imitators: the Dynasty Club, the Khyber, the Bombay Brasserie, etc. Their success proves that nobody ever went broke by overestimating the wealth of the public.



La Brasserie chef, up to Rs 12,000 for soup



China Garden from turbo to millions

The new restaurants appeal to those who are ill at ease at deluxe hotels

45,000 and Rs 1,50,000 and saunas can be bought off-the-shelf for Rs 1,75,000, both are selling briskly—in fact, 12 jacuzzis have been sold in the last three months.

The bathroom craze is yet to catch on in most other cities (though a Poona industrialist has built a garden in his bathroom), but Bombay shows signs of being the next to succumb. Already, American faucets (at Rs 2,400 a tap) are preferred to Indian fittings (average price: Rs 150). Perhaps, this is because of their better quality, but the most striking feature of the current boom in conspicuous consumption is that price does not always reflect quality. One instance: a current Bombay craze is to refloor bathrooms with marble. Italian marble (at Rs 400 to Rs 500 per square foot) is nearly always selected over the domestic variety (at Rs 200 per square foot). The catch is that Indian marble (from Makrana in Rajasthan) is longer lasting, harder and retains its shine. "But," explains decorator Anil Dighe, "the whole deal is about status not quality, so people generally end up buying Italian marble even though it is inferior."



Car interior: entertainment centre

It is no accident that marble, generally associated with temple architecture, should end up in the bathroom, but there is as big a boom in other interior fittings. Says Monica Vazir Ali of The Drawing Room, a successful furniture store in Bombay, "There's no dearth of money in this city. And if people can't get what they want here, they simply hop over to

Bangkok and buy it there."

Presently, granite is the new status symbol. (It gained popularity after The Oberoi chain chose it as the cornerstone of its redecoration.) Entire flats in Bombay have been refloored and a house in Bangalore's Koramangala is built completely from granite. The high price of granite (Rs 250 per square foot) is not a factor because most of those who prefer it do not put their designers on a tight budget. Says a Bombay architect, "In 1976 I spent Rs 8,000 on decorating a client's house at Grand Paradi apartments. Today that same work would cost Rs 12 lakhs." And the client would probably be willing to spend more.

JUNGLE PARTIES AND OTHER MOVABLE FEASTS

Nearly as striking as the boom in house construction and furnishings has been the vast explosion in the eating-out and partying-out sector. Generally, the money has come from a new clientele. Says restaurant manager Ambrose at Delhi's Hyatt Regency, "Eight years ago, when I started off in the profession, five-star hotels were used by foreigners,

company executives and the very rich. That's not so any longer. Nowadays it is considered no big deal to have a kid's birthday party at a five-star hotel. At the coffee shop, we get kids of just 13 and 14 coming in on their own. And now kitty parties are so much on the increase that we have decided to give incentives: for every nine ladies who come for a kitty party, the tenth is free."

While in Delhi and Bangalore the new deluxe hotels have capitalised on the spurt in demand by opening several new restaurants, it is Bombay that has led the rest in this respect: since 1986, three new hotels have opened, but several high-priced, non-five-star places have also boomed.

The current eating-out craze has confused the five-star hotels. Traditionally, the chains have expanded the market by introducing new cuisines to India (The Oberois brought Polynesian food; the Taj brought *nouvelle cuisine* and Sichuan Chinese; ITC turned the humble kebab into *haute cuisine*). In recent years, however, their innovations have met with less success. The Taj group's



A fashion show: yes, but where's the champagne?

HYPE FASHION

THE FASHION SHOW AS ENTERTAINMENT FORM

■ Perhaps nothing typifies the current mood of the conspicuous consumer as much as the fashion show: the urban entertainment form of 1989. The uninitiated may believe that the purpose of a fashion show is to sell clothes. Perhaps that's the way it is in New York, Paris and Milan, but in Bombay and Delhi sales have nothing to do with it.

Visualise your typical conspicuous consumer (let's call him CC for short). Most evenings, CC returns from office/shop/factory, tired and bored. Mrs CC, however, wants to go out and have fun. What can they do? Movies? No, they see them on video. Theatre? Too cerebral. Parties? Maybe, but then one has to make conversation and this is a strain.

So, voilà, the fashion show! Consider the advantages. You see lots of glamorous people and they see you. There's lots of pretty girls. There's usually wine; if Khazana is organising it, then there's champagne and Interplaza served caviar. There's always music (disco if the clothes are young, Nat King Cole otherwise). And there's no need to make conversation or be interesting! Can the CC resist this bubble-gum for the eyes? No way. Just see the crowds at the Ensemble, Ravissant, Zandra Rhodes, Paul Salon, Interplaza, Art Wear and Khazana shows!

What, you ask, do the fashion houses get in return for their investment? In a word: hype. A fashion show ensures that you'll be written about; colour pictures of your models will grace the magazines for months afterwards.

And, after all, isn't hype what matters?

Nice girls, nice crowd, nice wine, shame about the clothes





Kumar's residence: envy of other conspicuous consumers

CASSETTE KING

MAKING MILLIONS THE GULSHAN KUMAR WAY

■ His house in Delhi would be the envy of all other CCs (conspicuous consumers)—it has palatial dimensions. His Mercedes Benz is the latest model. His six dogs are thoroughbred Dobermanns. All of Gulshan Kumar's wealth flows from the success of Super Cassettes India Ltd (turnover: Rs 150 crores per annum), the leading recorded music company.

A common enough tale? Maybe. Except that Kumar is just 33 and started his career ten years ago by running a small electrical repair shop with his mother's savings. In under a decade, he has gone from bulbs to billions and expanded the market for pre-recorded cassettes (still largely in the hands of pirates).

Kumar is merely among the most successful of a new breed of entrepreneurs who have come out of nowhere, frequently taken on established corporations (in Gulshan's case, the venerable industry pioneer: the Gramophone Company of India), rewritten the rules and won. In the process, they have earned phenomenal fortunes and, like all first-generation rich, spent the money on lavish and conspicuous consumption.

Gulshan Kumar is now something of a celebrity and the well-educated executives who once loathed him find themselves deferring to his clout. He manufactures TV sets, video players, tape recorders and pre-recorded video cassettes (his biggest hit: *Lai dupatta maihal ka*, which sold 70,000 copies).

Next is a planned move into films. Given his personal style, he will be at home in the Bombay film industry.

Gulshan Kumar is now something of a celebrity and the well-educated executives who once loathed him find themselves deferring to his clout.

Gulshan Kumar: bulbs to billions



experiment with Thai food has fizzled out and the Oberoi's attempt to popularise a French style grill-room (The Rotisseries in Bombay and Calcutta, La Rochelle in Delhi, etc.) hasn't come off.

Instead, only two kinds of restaurants do well: North Indian and North Indian-Chinese (or Sino-Ludhiana as it is known in the trade). The most successful restaurant in Madras is ITC's Peshawar and in Delhi, the Indian restaurants at the new hotels draw the crowds. Likewise in Bombay, the big hits of the last few years have been China Garden, Khyber, the Bombay Brasserie and the Jewel of India.

None of the successful restaurants is cheap (expect to pay a minimum of Rs 200 per head; more if you are drinking) and the hotel trade has accepted that it missed the emergence of a new class of



Madras shopping centre: consumption goes south

moneyed customers who do not share the tastes of the traditional clientele. In Delhi, this intermediate class is happiest at an Indian restaurant with a *ghazal* singer (and the average check per table can reach Rs 1,000) and in Bombay, because it is intimidated by the snobbish environs of the new Oberoi or the old world elegance of the Taj, it prefers China Garden where regulars gossip with waiters as equals and the owner, a former limbo dancer, has now become the intermediate class' biggest social catch.

Delhi hotels have coped better than those in Bombay. The Hyatt Regency willingly despatched sound-records to the zoo to tape animal sounds for a 'jungle party'. And most banquet managers will gladly organise a 'theme wedding' (fancy dress, Arabian nights, dur-

bar-style—you name it!) for a well-heeled client. Says the general manager of one Delhi five-star hotel, "I have had people coming in and asking to buy coupons to eat at our restaurants. I have had guests charging at the buffet table at a wedding party and overturning it. And I know people who want to spend Rs 600 per head on a birthday party for a five-year-old. But let's face it: that's my clientele and I'm not going to laugh at those who pay my bills."

The consequence of this has been that despite the proliferation of new deluxe hotels in Delhi, the increase in local business has been such that the profits keep rolling in. Only the swanky refurbished Oberoi has bucked the trend and refused to accept weddings.

What makes five-star hotels such an integral element of partying? Says the



India Magazine's Malvika Singh, "Many of the people who've just made money use deluxe hotels as reference points because they have no experience of anything else." Thus, Delhi's Taj Palace and Maurya hotels are packed out for North Indian weddings with the kind of persons who would not normally be comfortable in such surroundings.

But when the super-rich marry off their children, they give hotels a miss and try and stage their own shows. Earlier, the industrial elite would turn family weddings into small, relatively intimate affairs. But now, the consumption couldn't be more conspicuous. The weddings of each of Dhirubhai Ambani's children (usually at the biggest hockey or football pitch available) have become mass participation events in which half the staff of Bombay's Taj Mahal hotel is



Husain at work: home furnishing accessory

THE NAME GAME

PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER AS ACCESSORY DESIGNER

■ This is a tough one. Imagine that you are a conspicuous consumer (CC). You have put granite on the drawing-room floor, marble on the bedroom walls, installed a jacuzzi in your bathroom and put mega-bass speakers in CC Jr's Maruti deluxe. Now what? How do you top this?

Not easy, right? Well, one way is to go in for art. You cover the marble walls with large canvases by Husain, Anjolie Ela Menon, Manjit Bawa and (if you are slightly behind the times) B. Prabha. You tell your buddies how much they cost; you attend openings of art exhibitions and plan months in advance what you are going to wear to the Christie's/Sotheby's auction. Later, when friends ask your wife about the extravagant sums spent on paintings, she can talk about her commitment to Indian art ("especially the younger artists, who I like to encourage") and when your colleagues tell you that you've been had, you can wink knowingly and say, "Arra, it is an investment, *yaar*. Do you know how much the Husain went for at the Sotheby's auction?" Thus, you kill three birds with one stone: (1) you are a patron of the art; (2) you are a canny businessman; and (3) you can match the colour of the jacuzzi to the exact shade of the Husain horse/Menon window and have a really integrated design scheme for your house.

The concept of art as a designer accessory has taken firm root over the last four years. The artists have never had it so good: prices are soaring. The catch is that you must be a 'name' so that your paintings become like designer jeans—it's the label that counts.

The catch is that you must be a 'name' so that your paintings become like designer jeans—it's the label that counts

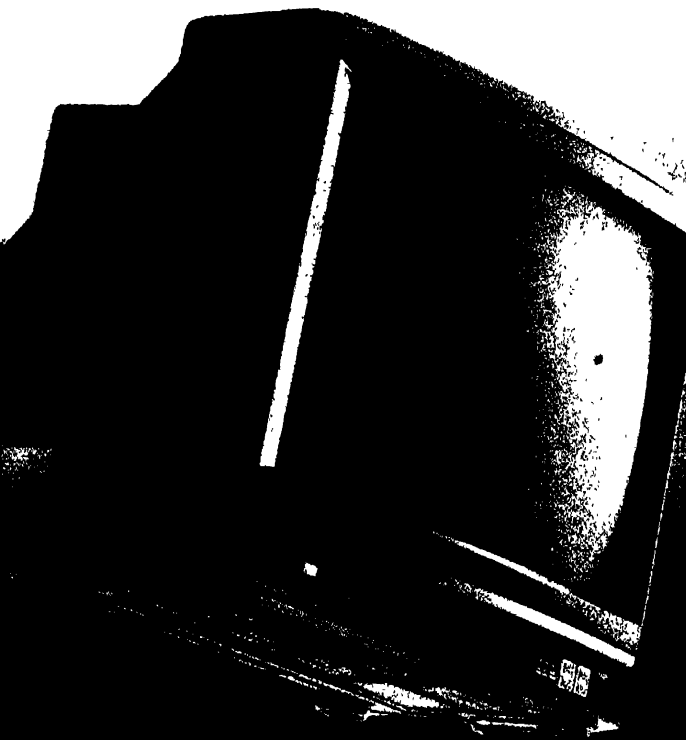
Anjolie Ela Menon: windows to view shirts



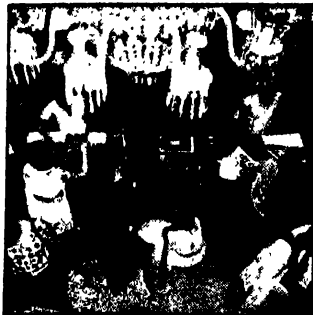
Banned?
Because it has a 53 cm FST?
Because it's way ahead of time?
Because it has mind-blowing features?
Or just because it's going to unleash
a fresh wave of envy?

ONIDA 21

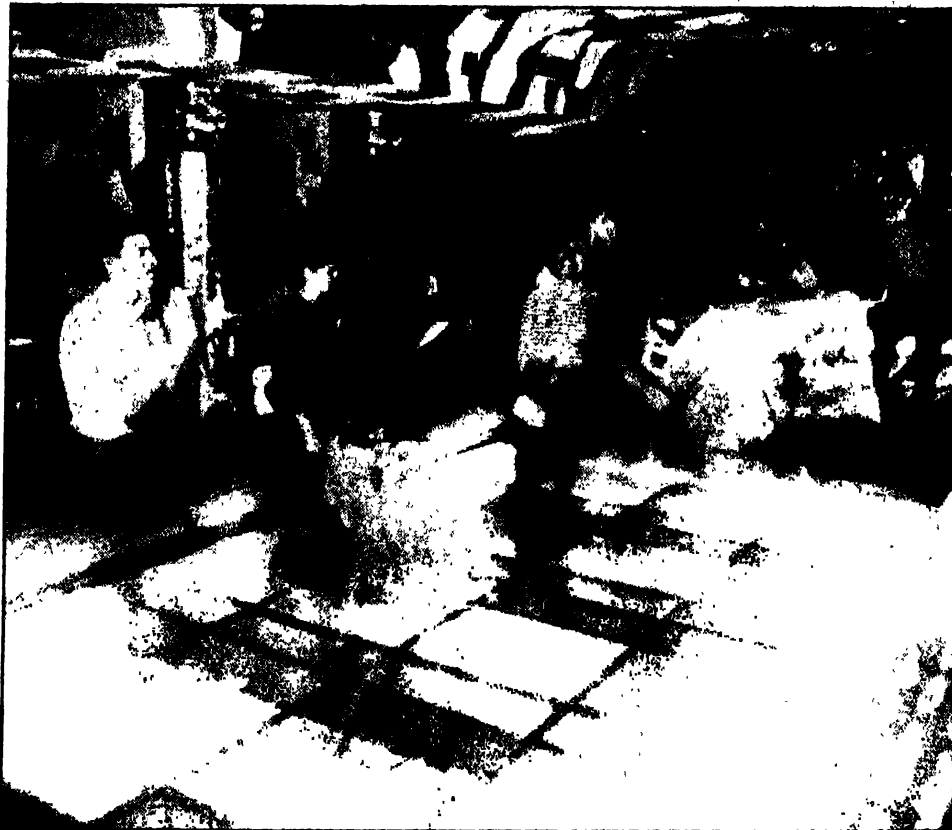
Neighbour's envy. Owner's pride.



**SHOULD
THE NEW ONIDA
BE BANNED?**



(Above) Jewellers have never had it so good: gold is perfect for the new money; (right) the Ghungroo disco: if you've got it, flaunt it!



drafted to assist and the *garbas* (a Gujarati folk dance) are performed at a cricket stadium. Two years ago, *Sirhind* and *Hinduja*, the world's richest Indian, married his daughter off in a style that must have set him back by four crore rupees or more. And recently, B.K. Birla, India's richest man, broke with his family's low-key tradition to celebrate his grandson Kumaramangalam's wedding in the manner of a carnival. Enough money was spent on the festivities to run a small municipality for a year and an aghast finance ministry ordered an enquiry.

The moral of these stories is that conspicuous consumption is not the prerogative of the *nouveau riche* Punjabi or the Lagos Sindhi. When the barons of Indian business enter the fray, their ostentation leaves everyone else gaping.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS USUALLY BLACK

In India, the demand for gold is usually regarded as symptomatic of the health of the economy. By that reckoning, there's plenty of money floating around. Over the last four years, gold sales have shot up and in Delhi, a craze for diamonds persists. Says Ananya Choudhury of A.

Sirkar and Sons, a Calcutta jeweller, "Gold is in. Money is not a factor." Agrees Jayanta Chandra of another Calcutta firm, "Our sales have been increasing by 15-20 per cent for the last four years."

Much of the wealth that goes into jewellery has never been mentioned on a tax return. Says a Delhi jeweller, "Gold is perfect for the new money. It has a resale value as well as a show-off potential. Moreover, many of the people now buying jewellery have inherited no

pieces from their parents. So they have several generations to make up for." Punjabi wives apparently prefer diamonds, but husbands are less keen because of limited resale opportunity.

At present jewellery represents an ideal means of stashing away black money. In Calcutta, they still talk about a raid on a wealthy *marwari* family that yielded nothing—till a raider noticed the large number of dogs in the house. The jewellery was pasted to the bellies of the canines!

If jewellery shops have never had it so good, the same is true of the rest of the retailing sector. Over the last three years, shops dealing in relatively new products have mushroomed. Some of these goods (kitchen equipment, speciality foods, electronic entertainment units, etc.) appear in most societies after a certain level of economic development.

More startling has been the growth in two new sectors—'high fashion' garments and car accessories. Of these, the automobile furnishing boom is particularly astonishing. Shops in big cities sell everything required to make a Maruti feel like a Ferrari and their success is usually ascribed to the duty structure that makes the acquisition of imported cars nearly impossible because of their



Will the spending boom last? Most people think it will unless the economy slides into a deep recession. So, if you hope to keep up with the Junejas start trying now



Arjun Singh's 'marble palace': creation of the media?

CAVIAR REGIME

WHAT THE RULERS DO, THE PEOPLE FOLLOW

■ It has now become fashionable to deride Rajiv Gandhi's 'expensive tastes' and to dismiss the chartered Jumbo jet full of hacks, flacks and *babus* that he takes abroad four times a year as the 'caviar express'. But the Prime Minister's alleged extravagance is only the tip of the governmental iceberg.

These days, ministers have no compunctions about using official facilities for fun. As internal security minister, Arun Nehru treated a BSF jet as his own (the seating was rearranged to accommodate his frame).

As startling is the tendency to flaunt private wealth that is rarely legitimately acquired. Nearly everyone of consequence owns a farmhouse near Delhi: in most cases, political clout has been used to buy the land on the cheap. A gentleman's agreement, however, prevents politicians from discussing each other's wealth. When this convention is broken (Arjun Singh's 'marble palace', Aitabh Bachchan's Swiss flat, Arun Nehru's foreign jaunt, etc.), the media are accused of "sinking to a new low".

The trend has affected the public sector too. The Industrial Development Bank of India just spent an astronomical Rs 800 per square foot to decorate the chairman's cabin at its glitzy new building on Bombay's Cuffe Parade.

The most bizarre aspect of all this is that ministers and public sector chiefs who authorise this expenditure are expected to live on salaries that are laughably small by private sector standards. The austerity-vulgarity trade-off is thus institutionalised.

Ministers now have no compunctions about using official facilities for fun. As startling is the tendency to flaunt private wealth that is rarely legitimately acquired

Satish Sharma at his farmhouse: owning one is the 'in' thing



prohibitive prices. Hence the incentive to jazz up Indian cars.

Says Robin, who owns south Delhi's Car de Centre (no, not Car da Centre), "Everyone wants his car to be different and is willing to pay for it. There are now 200 car accessory shops in Delhi. Many of my customers spend Rs 2,000 to 3,000 every month adding new things to their cars."

Some in-demand accessories: electronic sirens, imported reverse horns, mega-bass stereo systems, digital chronometers, body restyling to take on the contours of a sports car, engine and silencer tinkering to increase the roar to Formula One levels, mini-refrigerators, and even video recorders.

While the urge to spend on cars may seem strange, it lacks the mega-bucks basis of the great fashion boom. (See: *Year of the Designer*, SUNDAY 19-25



Kumaramangalam Birla's wedding: appalled the finance ministry

February 1989.) Bombay's Ensemble where outfits can cost up to Rs 40,000 tops the list, but there are others: Ravissant, Once Upon A Time, Interplaza, Benzer, In Style and Paul Salon for instance. The irony is that side by side with this boom, a new sector based on export surplus—where quality is often high and prices low—has also developed. But while 'pavement fashion' has succeeded in transforming the look of the urban middle class, the new money sticks to the boutiques even though the clothes may be shoddily tailored and are nearly always overpriced.

But then, in this urge to spend, spend, spend, quality frequently loses out to other factors. In the case of high fashion, here, as in the US, it is not garments that are being bought but labels. The new money says it

is buying outfits; but what it is *really* purchasing is the social cachet of being clothed by a name.

IT IS BETTER TO BE NOUVEAU THAN NOT RICHE AT ALL

Will the spending boom last? Most people think it will unless the economy slides into a deep recession. The 20 per cent tax on deluxe hotels which the industry feared would lead to its ruination has had no impact on turnover. In other sectors too, indications are that demand is fairly price inelastic.

And even a recession will only temporarily halt the rise of spending classes—they are here to stay for the long haul. Explains economist Surjit Bhalla,



B. K. Birla, India's richest man, celebrated his grandson's wedding in the manner of a carnival. Enough money was spent on the festivities to run a small municipality for a year

"All the macro indicators suggest that there has been a significant shift in income distribution. Money has gone to new groups; income inequalities have increased. Because the Government of India refuses to release the micro data, this is difficult to substantiate."

It is these 'new groups' that will continue to dictate the pattern of expenditure at the top end of the market. Says Malvika Singh, "In the short run, people like us will make fun of them and laugh at their predilection for fake Louis XV furniture. But, in the long run, we will come to accept them and they, in turn, will sharpen their tastes. Don't forget, every family that is rich today was *nouveau* once."

So, if you hope to keep up with the Junejas, start trying now. They are going to be a part of our lives forever.

Patralekha Chatterjee with reports from SUNDAY's bureaux



A shopping complex under construction in Kerala: consumers' paradise

G'BYE FROM DUBAI

KEEPING UP WITH THE JOHNS

■ When Jose Antony, an expatriate doctor settled in the US, came home to Kerala last month after five years abroad, he was dumbfounded. Small villages had beauty parlours, video libraries, shopping centres and Kerala-style fast food joints. His formerly humble relatives had vacuum cleaners, washing machines, colour TV sets and even designer tiles. Remarks a startled Antony, "They say Kerala is a poor state with no industry, but today it is a consumers' paradise!"

The figures speak for themselves. Last year, the 18 lakh Malayalis settled abroad remitted between Rs 1,200 and 1,500 crores. Their families quickly spent much of this money on consumer goods. One instance: the small town of Chavakkad (population: 40,000), near Trichur, has more than 500 tourist cars and nearly 400 autorickshaws. Says Saifuddin, a local political leader, "In 1975, we had only five taxis. Today, our children drink Tang and our women use Camay soap."

There are other examples. Former state home minister V. Ravi recalls how he once visited an Adivasi hut in Wynad district to find the occupants using Colgate toiletries; last year 27 new boutiques opened in Cochin; the Cochin Stock Exchange had a turnover of Rs 2 lakhs a day in 1983—today the figure is Rs 8 crores.

Obviously, new money is not a North Indian or even an upper-middle class phenomenon. If in Delhi, they keep up with the Junejas; in Cochin, they keep up with the Johns!

Sridhar S. Pillay/Trivandrum



An expensive residence in Kerala: the Gulf generation takes over

New money is not a North Indian or even an upper-middle class phenomenon. If in Delhi, they keep up with the Junejas; in Cochin, they keep up with the Johns

"Look," says Mohammad Abdur Hai, "all I'm saying is that give hydro power as much importance as you give thermal power. No more, no less." Hai, chairman and managing director of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), despite his simple plea, may have a problem. His organisation, like the rest of the hydroelectric power sector, has a major barrier: the government itself.

Since the heyday of the late Fifties and Sixties, when the prestigious Bhakra Nangal and Damodar Valley hydro power-cum-irrigation projects came up, there have not been any mega projects on the lines of the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) plants such as Korba and Singrauli. There is a simple reason for this, according to a Central Electricity Authority (CEA) official who declines to be identified, "As demand for power grew (more than doubling since 1980 alone), the swing towards thermal occurred, especially as hydro plants take a longer time to put up, often more than six to seven years. Politically that is bad, as a legislator's term is only five years." He adds, "Hydro is a victim of short-term planning."

That is a pity, say observers, because hydro plants, besides offering a non-polluting power source, also do not require constant replenishment of expensive raw materials like oil and coal as thermal plants do. Moreover, hydro plants can operate for more than 50

years, whereas thermal plants require frequent and sometimes complete overhauling or change of machinery.

The ministry of energy continually harps on the magic "potential" of hydro power in the country—close to one lakh MW—enough to meet the electricity demand well into the next century. However, it has remained a potential with only 18,197 MW of the hydro power capacity utilised since Independence. And, compared to thermal power, the hydro share in the power sector has been on a constant decline. In the early Sixties hydro power comprised 41 per cent of total electricity availability. Today, it stands at 30 per cent of India's total generating capacity of almost 59,000 MW. (The rest comprises thermal energy, with nuclear power chipping in with less than 3 per cent of the total). Says Vinod Krishna Khanna, joint secretary (hydro) in the department of power, "We are trying to arrest the ratio



A transmission tower on the Ganges at Farakka; (inset) M.A. Hai: 'give hydro power a chance'

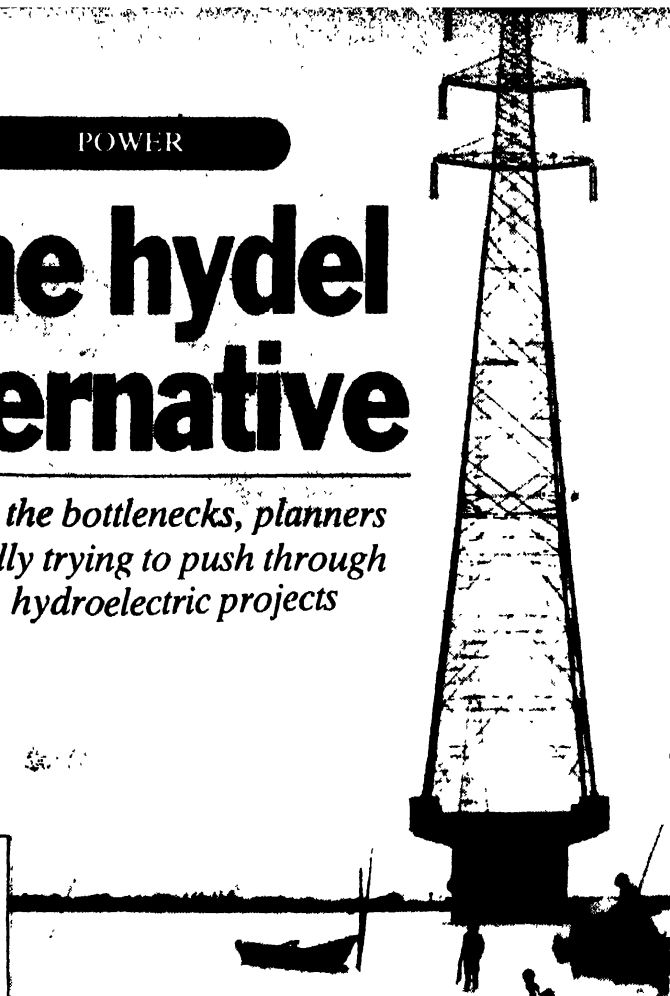
decline. We hope to set the balance right by the Ninth Plan." He adds, "It's being realised now that hydro is very important, in fact, intrinsically important to the country's development."

That probably accounts for the spate of hydro projects currently on the anvil. Yet, they appear to be stuck rather than moving ahead rapidly, and again the government is responsible. Negotiations are currently on with the Canadian government for the 300 MW Chamara Stage-II project in Himachal Pradesh, worth Rs 673 crores (the 540 MW Chamara-I is expected to be commissioned by 1992) and officials don't have a clue of when work might start. Negotiations—after running the gamut of clearances from the CEA, ministry of environment, the Public Investment Board and the central cabinet—often take four years or more. The 390 MW Dulhasti project in Jammu and Kashmir, costing a staggering Rs 1,895 crores, has been

POWER

The hydel alternative

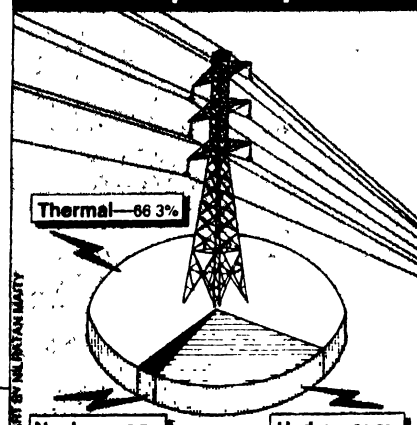
Despite the bottlenecks, planners are finally trying to push through mega hydroelectric projects



stuck for the past eight years, with the government still not decided on whether the turnkey contract should go to CGEF-Alstom of France or a 13-member consortium led by Asca-Brown Boveri from Austria. The project will take at least five years to be commissioned after the government is done with its wrangling.

The story is repeated in another J&K project—the 480 MW Uri hydro project. Negotiations are on with Sweden and Australia for funding and award of

The power split





The Salal hydel project dam: huge potential

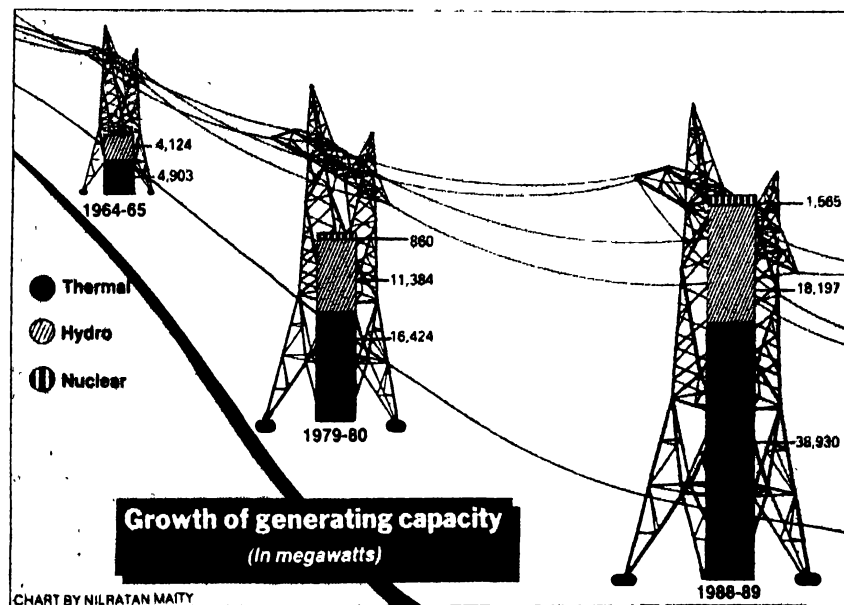
like NHPC calls for compromises. The major share of power goes to the particular state, and it demands that 25 per cent of the workforce be from the state. For an NHPC project, the state gets 12 per cent power free in addition to its share of electricity. And states often squabble with each other. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu decided to go ahead with hydro projects—the Shiva Samud-

many are not. NHPC is better organised." (At present, 80 per cent of all hydro projects are managed by SEBs.) Moreover, says Khanna, "hydel projects, especially new projects, should be for a region as a whole. And one state may not be able to take up a large project on its own."

This wisdom, apparently, has struck states, too, especially Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. HP is going ahead with the 1500 MW Nathpa-Jhakri project on the Sutlej river, and has formed the Nathpa-Jhari Power Corporation, with the central government providing 75 per cent of the capital and HP chipping in with the rest. The World Bank will provide 40 per cent of Nathpa's Rs 2,400-crore price tag. The UP government has also set up a joint agency with the Centre—the Tehri Hydroelectric Power Corporation—for a 2,400 MW project. The Soviet Union has confirmed consultancy and rouble credit for this project. In fact, this precedence—of forming project corporations—has got the J&K government to think twice

contract. Both the J&K projects are awaiting clearance from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, and, of course, finally the cabinet itself. Meanwhile, project costs keep shooting up. The prime example is the Koel Karo project in Bihar. Already Rs 120 crores has been spent on land acquisition, and the cost of the Rs 900-crore 710 MW project could treble by the time it goes on stream, well into the 1990s. On the other hand, thermal projects continue to get speedy clearances and financial approval.

The central government is not the only one responsible for foul-ups. State governments—irrespective of their political colouring—do their bit to drag hydro down. The problem is that water, the only raw material required, is a state subject. Says NHPC's Hai, "There is a natural reluctance on the part of states to give consent for a hydro project. Not one state wants to part with water." And NHPC can only take up projects for which a state is ready to help, or progress can be very difficult. State electricity boards (SEBs) do parallel hydro work, says the CEA official, and any collaboration with central agencies



ram and Bhavanikottalai respectively—but Andhra Pradesh and Kerala vehemently opposed the idea, objecting to the electricity sharing arrangement besides the fact that the projects were going to other states. How Cauvery river waters should be used is still disputed by Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. While 400 MW of hydel projects are stuck in the south, even more could come up once the disputes are resolved.

One way out of the problem, says the power department's Khanna, is to enlarge the role of central agencies. Says he, "Some of the SEBs are run well, but

about giving the go-head to future NHPC projects in the state.

The stumbling blocks apart, there is no gainsaying the fact that hydro power is an important reality—both economically and politically. But economics may just win out, if not in an election year, then in the next few years. The Eighth Plan, beginning next year, calls for 9,000 MW of new hydro capacity. Analysts say this is part of a new beginning for hydro power in India. And transforming this plan projection into concrete results is crucial for the country's overstretched power supply situation.

Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi

SILICON

Metkem gets go-ahead

The central government gives all support to the Madras company to set up a silicon facility with Hemlock technology

Remember the bitter, at times vicious, controversy that raged in 1985 and 1986 over whether the country should import technology for polysilicon or give a chance to fledgling indigenous research? Charges and counter-charges were traded like shares in a stock market, with some calling the indigenous technology sub-standard and unproven, and others branding the import decision a sell-out of national interest. There were Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiries and raids too on the residences of five top executives in the electronics bureaucracy, prominent among them being two former secretaries and two joint secretaries of the

electronics department.

Polysilicon is the basic raw material for the manufacture of solar photovoltaic (SPV) cells which generate solar energy and is also used in making chips for computers, and at the extreme end of the spectrum, for the missile and space programmes.

The antagonists were Metkem Silicon Ltd, a subsidiary of the Mettur Chemical and Industrial Corporation (MCIC) of Tamil Nadu, and Hemlock of the USA, a

technology for polysilicon.

But the controversy having died a quiet death, Metkem Silicon has now been given full support by the government and there is a move to arrive at a compromise by allowing Metkem to use and adapt the technology which has already been purchased from Hemlock at a cost of almost \$7 million.

Metkem Silicon has an installed capacity to produce 25 tonnes of polysilicon a year. The production process is to convert polysilicon into mono-crystal silicon which is then cut into wafers. These wafers are used by solar photovoltaic cell manufacturers to produce systems which will tap solar energy. The public sector Central Electronics Ltd (CEL) and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) are the two main manufacturers of solar energy systems.

Owing to the controversy that dogged

it in the initial years, Metkem Silicon's capacity utilisation has been very low and the company started out in the red. Now that the controversy has ended, Metkem Silicon's production has risen from about six tonnes in 1986 to 12 tonnes in 1988-89. Silicon wafer production also languished at first, but rose to 2.3 lakh wafers in the 15 months ended 31 March, 1988. According to a senior executive of Metkem Silicon, in

the current financial year, the company will be supplying five lakh wafers to CEL and BHEL.

The Union government has evinced interest in Metkem Silicon, even going to the extent of taking up a part of the equity capital and giving grants for plant upgradation and research. The equity capital of the company was originally Rs 1 crore. Some time ago it was raised to Rs 2.4 crores, with the central government taking up Rs 60 lakhs (25 per cent) and Mettur Chemicals increasing its stake of Rs 1.8 crores. In addition, the central government has given Metkem Silicon a grant of Rs 50 lakhs for upgrading its plant. Further, the government had decided about a year ago to designate Metkem Silicon as the National Silicon Facility (NSF).

Planning on the NSF originally began in the early Eighties and the deal with Hemlock was put through in order to get the technology and equipment for this facility which would meet the country's

The Union government has evinced interest in Metkem Silicon, even going to the extent of taking up a part of the equity capital and giving grants for plant upgradation

The Metkem Silicon factory: looking ahead



polysilicon, wafer and computer chip requirements. The government bought the technology, in the form of designs and drawings from Hemlock, but stopped further action on importing plant and machinery for the NSF after Metkem Silicon appeared on the scene.

The idea, it is now becoming apparent, is to pass on the Hemlock technology to Metkem Silicon. In order to do this, the government had to take an equity stake in Metkem Silicon since the agreement with Hemlock specified that its technology could not be used by a private party.

And it is essential that Metkem be allowed to use Hemlock technology. This is because Metkem, through its research and development, has been able to produce only lower-grade polysilicon which is good for solar energy

production but not for computer chip manufacture of defence applications.

Even though the decision to designate Metkem as the NSF and pass on the Hemlock technology was taken a year ago, they have not yet been implemented. And no one is forthcoming about the reasons for the delay. However, the support from the central government in the form of equity and grants and the psychological boost have made Metkem executives confident that they are on the road to recovery and can make further contributions to the national effort.

At present, Metkem Silicon has an accumulated loss of Rs 2.5 crores but the company is confident of breaking even in 1989-90 and going into the black in the next year.

R. Vijayaraghavan/Madras

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Pitroda has his way

The telecom czar finally blanks out the import lobby with the decision that all expansion schemes will be based on C-DoT know-how

The announcement did not come as much of a surprise, yet it has thrown multinational telecommunication companies off balance. On 12 July, the minister of state for communications, Giridhar Gomango, announced that India had adequate capacity to handle future

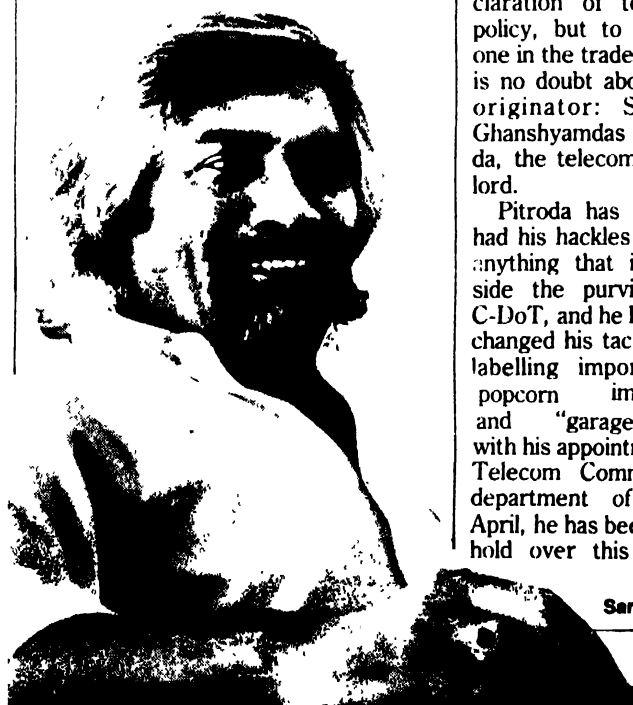
commissioning of telephone lines. That was not all. He also said that telecom expansion plans will be based on indigenous technology provided by the Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DoT). Gomango verbalised what amounts to a declaration of telecom policy, but to everyone in the trade, there is no doubt about the originator: Satyen Ghanshyamdas Pitroda, the telecom overlord.

Pitroda has always had his hackles up for anything that is outside the purview of C-DoT, and he has not changed his tack from labelling imports as popcorn imports and "garage technology". But with his appointment as chairman of the Telecom Commission and secretary, department of telecommunications in April, he has been able to consolidate his hold over this sector and make his

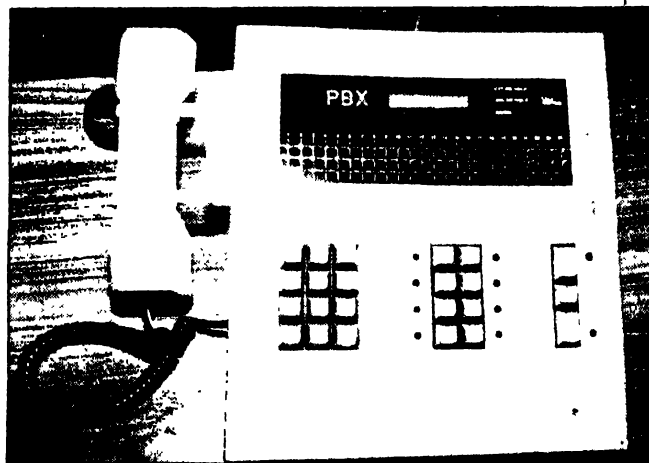
presence felt. This spells doom for foreign companies eyeing India's lucrative telecom business, worth approximately \$2 billion spread over the next decade. With Europe and North America soaked up with technology, the only remaining sizeable markets are China and India.

According to the minister's announcement, the hardest hit will be foreign digital exchanges—called switching systems in the jargon—which forms the meat of India's telecom appeal. The list of affected parties reads like a who's who of international telecom: AT & T of the US, Alcatel from France, Siemens AG of West Germany, Ericsson AB from Sweden and the Japanese Fujitsu Corp. Says an executive of an European telecom company, declining to be identified for obvious reasons: "We never know what is going to happen. First we are told that advanced switching systems are a priority for India, so we came here as we can offer them. We can provide them immediately. But Mr Pitroda seems convinced that he needs no help."

At stake is C-DoT, India's answer to the world. The organisation—with a mandate to develop domestic switching technology—is behind schedule, with only the 128-line Rural Automatic Exchange (RAX) to show for its efforts. C-DoT's real aim, to develop larger exchanges for over-stretched metro telephone systems, is in the testing stage, with production dates still hazy. India uses Alcatel E-10B digital ex-



Sam Pitroda: banning imports



The EPABX system from C-DoT: Indigenous design

changes, the Swedish AXE and an AT & T model which closely resembles C-DoT's RAX. In Mankapur, Uttar Pradesh, E-10B exchanges are in production as part of a collaboration. While it is clear that the Mankapur facility will not shut down, a proposal for setting up a similar unit in Bangalore—which

Alcatel has been pushing for more than five years—looks all set for C-DoT-based production.

But what is not clear at all is whether the import ban will be limited to switching systems, or whether it will include telephone instruments, transmission cables, satellite transmission equipment and state-of-the-art optic fibre technology as well. It is not clear if existing joint sector projects—Siemens and Ericsson both make telephone instruments for the Indian Telephone Indus-

tries—will be terminated or whether future joint sector projects will be disallowed if one party is foreign. Similarly, it is not clear if private Indian companies will be affected by C-DoT's predominance. (Pitroda told SUNDAY in May that he is contemplating more private sector participation. Perhaps getting rid of foreign competition is one way towards taking that step.) Everyone is waiting and watching—for the next salvo from Pitroda's bag of tricks.

Sudeep Chakravarti/New Delhi

INDUSTRIALISTS

Wadia faces a new crisis

The government refuses to extend the visa of the British passport-holding Bombay Dyeing chairman

The industrial and business community is watching with great interest the outcome of the fresh crisis faced by Bombay Dyeing chairman Nushi Wadia over the extension of his visa. Wadia, who landed at the Sahar international airport in Bombay on 11 July with wife

Maureen and his son, was handed a note signed by the deputy commissioner of police, airport, saying that the government had decided not to extend his visa which expired the next day. He was also asked to inform the police about his plans to leave the country on 12 July.

Wadia got a stay on the order from the Bombay High Court till 18 July, when his earlier case for Indian citizenship is expected to be heard.

Wadia's problems with the Indian government have far-reaching implications for the business community, particularly those who take an active interest in politics. Wadia's feud with Reliance's Dhirubhai Ambani, which started out as business rivalry in the Seventies, assumed a serious political dimension in the last two years. Wadia was accused by the government of hatching a conspiracy with press baron Ramnath Goenka, his chief accountant S. Gurmurthy and *Indian Express* editor Arun Shourie, of trying to destabilise Rajiv Gandhi's government.

Circles close to the Bombay Dyeing chief as well as many others believe that the decision to deny him an extension of his visa could have been taken only by Rajiv Gandhi. Wadia who holds a British passport (which he insists is only a travel document), has been facing problems with his visa which is issued to him only for a period of three to six months at a time. In the case of other British passport holders, visas are given for five years. It is obvious, say Wadia's friends, that the government is out to harass

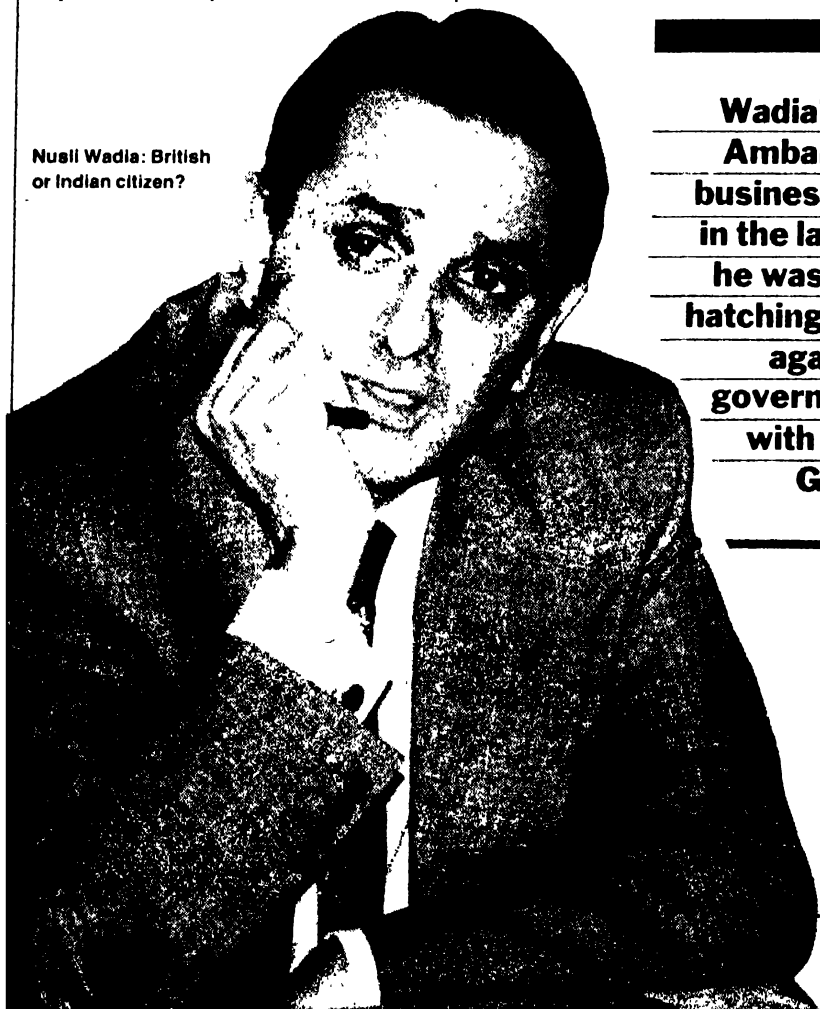
him. This is nothing but political vendetta, they say.

For the past two years Wadia has been subject to scrutiny by various government agencies, but they have not been able to pin him down for any misdeeds. In one instance, the chairman and managing director of Union Bank was reportedly summoned to Delhi and asked if Wadia was misusing any of the money loaned to him. Ironically, it is understood that he does not take even one-third

the funds he is eligible to borrow from the banks.

Business circles see Wadia's case as a classic example of what a government can do if an industrialist dares to indulge in what is perceived to be anti-government activities. Wadia's biggest drawback seems to arise from the fact that innumerable Indian-born businessmen like the Hinduja who have British passport, have enjoyed enormous advantages in India with little or no investment. In the case of Wadia, it has

Nushi Wadia: British or Indian citizen?



Wadia's feud with Ambani began as business rivalry. But in the last two years he was accused of hatching a conspiracy against the government along with Ramnath Goenka

been his Achilles' heel. Of course, Wadia's friends are quick to point out that Bombay Dyeing will not collapse if his visa is not renewed. Bombay Dyeing is a professionally-managed company and while Wadia does keep day-to-day control over his company's activities, his empire is not a spread out and diversified one like that of his arch rival Dhirubhai Ambani.

However, it is this rivalry, say corporate circles, that has kept Wadia on a leash and prevented him from growing vertically. Wadia thought of backward integration from DMT to paraxylene as early as the Seventies, but, as he himself claims, his plans were hijacked and implemented by the Ambanis. As a result, Bombay Dyeing today has to buy paraxylene from Reliance.

In March this year, the government canalised the import of paraxylene through the Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (IPCL). But the public sector giant, being new to the job, fumbled and failed to import the paraxylene on time. But Wadia's Bombay Dyeing barely had 10 to 15 days' stocks of paraxylene. IPCL then promised to meet his requirements from Reliance which produced paraxylene for its cap-



Dhirubhai Ambani: calling the shots

For the Ambanis, it is a victory of sorts in their ongoing feud with Wadia in that Bombay Dyeing is dependent on them for paraxylene supplies

tive consumption. The 750 tonnes of paraxylene that IPCL loaned from Reliance and fed to Bombay Dyeing has since been returned by Wadia.

But even on a long-term basis, it now appears that Wadia will have to depend on Reliance for paraxylene as it is the only company which makes more paraxylene than it needs for its own consumption. While Bombay Dyeing's requirement is said to be about 42,000 tonnes per annum, Reliance needs around 67,000 tonnes annually. Against this, the capacity of the Reliance plant at Patalganga, as Ambani had once men-

tioned, is nearly one lakh tonnes per annum. It is learnt that Reliance executives have met senior Bombay Dyeing officials regarding the supply of paraxylene on a continuing basis.

From the look of things, Wadia will probably find it easier to get paraxylene from Dhirubhai Ambani than a visa from the government. Delhi obviously perceives Wadia to be a serious threat. As for the Ambanis, it is a victory of sorts in their ongoing feud in that their arch rival will have to depend on them for paraxylene to run his business smoothly.

Olga Tellis/Bombay



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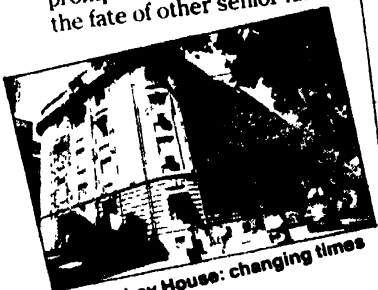
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Making way for the new

Is Bombay House, the stately headquarters of the Tata empire, proving to be too small for the new stars to co-exist with the established giants? The decision of Minoo H. Mody, a director of Tata Sons and chairman/executive director of a number of Tata companies, to "shed his executive functions and responsibilities in Tatas" as J.R.D. Tata put it, has prompted speculation about the fate of other senior lumi-



Bombay House: changing times

naries like Nam Palkhivala. Mody, according to one of his former colleagues on the Tata Sons board, is a man of sharp intellect. Starting as a chartered accountant, Mody masterminded the entry of the Tatas into the world of high-tech. He was the man behind the highly successful Tata Burroughs, now re-named Tata Unysis. With

Ratan Tata being projected as the new leader of the Tata group's high-tech efforts, there was perhaps little place for an old-timer like Mody. JRD's statement that Mody resigned for "personal and health reasons" is a standard euphemistic phraseology when one has differences of opinion, say Mody's friends.

Who is his knight?

The guessing game about the identity of the white knight (or is it knights?) who came to the rescue of Gammon India chief T.N. Subba Rao is getting hotter and curiouse. Having exhausted the gamut of the well-known Chhabria-haters—Vijay Mal-lya, Dhirubhai Ambani and the Hinduja—the hunt for the elusive white knight is now on in political circles. Subba Rao is only adding to the confusion by claiming that he is his own white knight and at the same time declaring that he has power-ful friends who would help him out. Not the least among these now seem to be heavyweights in Delhi. The Gammon chief is known to have undertaken the repairs of the Golden Temple at less than cost price. According

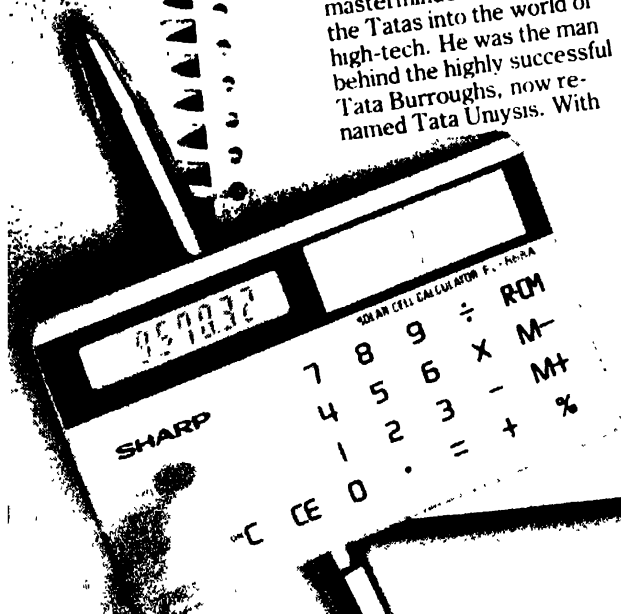
to knowledgeable sources, Gammon charged a modest Rs 18 lakhs for the work, when most others had wanted over Rs 2 crores. What's more, a small amount is still outstanding. So, could this small amount have come to his rescue when he was under siege by the Chhab-rias?

Oswal's coup

It was touch and go in the last stage, but Abhey Oswal pulled off a coup which has put him in the league of mega stars of Indian busi-ness. In a nail-biting finish, Oswal virtually grabbed the prestigious Rs 700-crore gas-based fertiliser project to be located at Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh. Oswal all along was the underdog in a race with powerful rivals. After London-based Swraj Paul cried off from the pro-ject, two other non resident Indians—B.K. Pande and Krishan Kaushal—the public sector Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilisers, fertiliser giant Kribhco and Oswal were in the fray. While the race narrowed down to Kribhco and Oswal, Kribhco was learnt to have a clear edge against Kribhco's Rs 690-crore project cost. Oswal put up a Rs 810-crore proposal. But the committee of secretaries failed to decide on the winner, and Oswal put up a lower revised estimate which was sent up to the Cabinet Committee on Eco-nomic Affairs (CCEA) only a day before it met to finally decide on the issue. And Abhey Oswal pulled off the impossible. Now, it is a mat-ter of time before he pushes his Rs 300-crore empire into the Rs 1,000-crore league.



Subba Rao: keep guessing



A controversial commission

A probe into a proposed land deal with Non-Resident Indians runs into litigation

KARNATAKA

The Karnataka land scam was bound to figure in the build-up to the election campaign in the state and the former chief minister, Ramakrishna Hegde, more than anyone else, had asked for it by challenging the Centre to order a probe by a Supreme Court judge to go into allegations of corruption levelled against him. So, when an announcement was made on 28

June that a commission of inquiry headed by justice Kuldip Singh, had been appointed, it was assumed that a politically explosive inquisition was in the offing. But it turned out to be a damp squib by getting bogged down in controversies even before it got started. The commission was to probe proposals of the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) to transfer 110 acres of land to the Non-Resident Indians Housing Association (NRIHA) and the sale of

a little over five acres in Bangalore city to Revajectu Builders and Developers (RBD). But the notification issued by the department of personnel and training under the ministry of personnel, public grievances and pension, has been challenged before the Karnataka High Court by T.N. Umesh, one of the partners of RDB on 11 July. Soli Sorabjee, appearing on behalf of the petitioner, contended before justice S.G. Doddakale Gowda that the notification amounted to an infringement by the Centre in the jurisdiction of the Karnataka High Court as the land deal was already a subject of

a writ petition before it and that a judgment on it, by justice K.A. Swamy, was awaited.

The petition contends that there was no need for the Centre to appoint a commission of inquiry to go into matters that were already in the process of being decided by the High Court. It also says that the move amounted to an interference in the court's functioning and was, therefore, a mala fide exercise of power aimed at extracting political mileage in view of the coming elections. Umesh has, hence, sought an injunction to restrain the commission from commencing its work and to quash the notification.

But the commission sparked off a political controversy the very day it was constituted. Ramakrishna Hegde welcomed the probe in a carefully-worded

was aimed at immobilising Hegde by tying him down to the commission's hearings during the election campaign.

The appointment of the presiding officer has itself become a matter of controversy. Justice Singh had earlier appeared on behalf of the Union government as the deputy attorney general before the Thakkar-Natarajan commission which probed the Fairfax scandal. Alleged state Janata Dal secretary M. Raghupati, "Justice Singh has been rewarded for the services he had rendered to the ruling party at the Centre in the Fairfax inquiry," and Dal president V.P. Singh charged that the appointment of the commission was intended to "harass senior Opposition leaders during the election year".

While the Janata Dal's reactions are along expected lines, the notification in

its terms of reference does not mention Ramakrishna Hegde. It is only in the annexures that it says that the NRI housing scheme was formulated at the instance of the former chief minister. But what the notification does try to establish is a nexus between the NRIHA, the builders, Lokhandwala Premises Pvt Ltd. of Bombay, and Manu Nichani, Hegde's son-in-law.

The notification states: "Telephone calls were made from the Lokhandwala Group,

Bombay, to the Bangalore number of Shri Manoharlal Nichani, son-in-law of the then chief minister of Karnataka on certain dates on or around which certain important decisions were taken by the BDA. It details the dates of the telephone calls and the important steps in the stalled deal as follows:

- A telephone call is made on 17 March, 1987 and the architect of the Lokhandwala Group, Naren Kuwadekar, writes a letter to the chairman of the BDA on 19 March;
- Telephone call on 25 April: the BDA considers the NRIHA proposal on the



Ramakrishna Hegde: unperturbed

statement but wondered if the Centre had consulted the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court before issuing the notification. Dismissed chief minister S.R. Bommai, while welcoming the probe, demanded simultaneous inquiries into the Fairfax, Bofors and other scandals that had put the government of Rajiv Gandhi in a tight spot. "Otherwise," said Bommai, "the inference would be that the probe was politically motivated." Chairman of the Janata Dal campaign committee and former minister, M.P. Prakash, was even more forthright in his accusation. He charged that the move

same day;

- Telephone call on 1 July, 1987: the BDA approves the allotment of 110 acres of land to the NRIHA in its meeting held on 3 July;
- Telephone call on 10 August: the BDA, vide its letter dated 10/12 August 1987, seeks approval of the state government to go ahead with the project and asks the NRIHA to deposit Rs 50 lakhs towards 20 per cent of the land cost.

The notification reveals that the auditor of Lokhandwala and a director of one of the Lokhandwala companies were appointed as directors of the NRIHA. Salvador Monis, another director of a Lokhandwala company was appointed the manager of the housing body. The

Ramakrishna Hegde welcomed the probe in a carefully-worded statement but wondered if the Centre had consulted the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court before issuing the notification

marketing officer of the NRIHA was an employee of Lokhandwala Consultancy Pvt Ltd. Moreover, the NRIHA had no share capital or assets in India. The two bank accounts that the housing body had opened showed a total deposit of only Rs 1,000 and that amount, too, was provided by Lokhandwala Premises Pvt Ltd.

But an unperturbed Hegde argues that he could have cleared the project anytime between May 1987, when he went abroad, and August 1988, when he resigned, if he had any personal stake in the matter. "I was the chief minister; do you think I could not have done it?" he asks. In fact, Hegde feels that he stands absolved of the charges levelled against him by the fact that the project was not cleared by the government. "They want to probe into a mere proposal. If at all they have any evidence from the enforcement director and the CBI investigations, why don't they prosecute me? Why do they need a commission of inquiry?" Hegde wonders. In the Reva-jeetu case, however, the link of the Hegde family seems a little more apparent. Shoba Makhija, sister of Nichani, has 50 per cent interest in the firm's profits. But a case regarding this deal has already been heard by the High Court and the judgement is pending.

Prakash Belawadi / Bangalore

The Hindu alliance

The BJP decides to join hands with the Shiv Sena in the state

MAHARASHTRA

The Bombay bandh, which was called by the Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on 3 July in protest against the killing of RSS activists in Moga, Punjab, late last month, appears to have cemented the bond between the two parties in Maharashtra. The state unit of the BJP was all along in favour of entering into an electoral alliance with the Shiv Sena, but the party's national leadership feared that such an understanding would ruin its chances of having any agreement with other secular national parties, who perceive the Shiv Sena as a communal force.

But, said the young BJP MP, Pramod Mahajan, that "it was the reality of the situation in Maharashtra that finally forced the national leadership to fall in

line with the political thinking of the local unit". Mahajan said that the BJP's popularity in the state declined in the past five or six years, though it managed to secure 10 per cent of the votes and had 16 sitting MLAs. The BJP was always considered a Hindu party in Maharashtra and Mahajan feared that if it deviated from its original line—as it appeared to have done in recent years—if would be written off in the state. During the last one year, the Shiv Sena, said Mahajan, literally took over from where the old Jana Sangh had left off and gained ground not only in Bombay but in almost every district.

The success of the bandh brought to light the Shiv Sena's growing influence in Bombay. While newspapers and most political parties attributed its success to people's fear of the Shiv Sena, the BJP organ, *Tarun Bharat*, struck a different note by claiming that the bandh succeeded because of the "atmosphere created by the BJP during the centenary year of Dr Hegdewar."

The Bombay bandh, which spread spontaneously to the whole of Maharashtra, was a significant pointer to the



Bal Thackeray with BJP and Shiv Sena leaders: playing the Hindu card

threat posed by the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance to the ruling Congress(I). Said Pramod Navalkar of the Shiv Sena: "There is no doubt that we will fight the elections together. We expect a majority. We will have Hinduism as our platform. They (the BJP) worked for the bandh. They held meetings all over Bombay and Maharashtra."

The Shiv Sena-BJP strategy is that the Shiv Sena will help the BJP contest the parliamentary seats while they themselves will concentrate on the Assembly seats. The Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, feels that merely having one or two members in Parliament will not be effective in increasing the influence of his party. So, instead of exhausting its financial resources in fighting the parliamentary elections, the Shiv Sena plans to conserve all its strength for contesting the Assembly polls.

The BJP has been claiming that it will win 35 of the 48 parliamentary seats from the state. It also hopes to convince the Shiv Sena to fight at least a few seats in the rural areas so that the latter's boys would feel enthused to work for the BJP candidates. Maharashtra is the third largest state in the country in terms of representation in Parliament, and the BJP, with its aim of finding a place in the ruling combine at the Centre if the Congress(I) were to lose sees Maharashtra as an important springboard.

While the Shiv Sena and the BJP exude confidence, panic seems to have gripped the Congress(I) and Janata Dal. Though chief minister Sharad Pawar has said that his party will win 47 of the 48 parliamentary seats, other Congressmen do not feel so sure any more.

The Congress(I) condemned the bandh as an attempt by the Shiv Sena-BJP combine to make political capital out of a human tragedy. For the Opposition, however, it was a Catch 22 situation: it could neither oppose it nor support it openly. The only resistance to the bandh was put up by the Dalit Muslim Suraksha Mahasangh, headed by Haji Mastan. On the day of the bandh, shops in Bombay's Muslim-dominated areas remained open and did business as usual.

From all indications it appears that the Shiv Sena-BJP combine will play up the Punjab situation as a major election issue in the state and this might enable the Janata Dal to have an understanding with it, no matter how informal. And if such an agreement is reached, if only on the Punjab issue, the Congress(I)'s poll prospects in the state might be trumped by the Hindu card in the Opposition's hand.

Olga Tellis/Bombay

Foes as friends

Jayalalitha re-admits her arch-enemy Veerappan into the AIADMK

TAMIL NADU

It was 13 July, a Thursday. His astrologers had told him that it was the most auspicious day in the week to stage a coup within the AIADMK. And so on that day, R.M. Veerappan, a former minister and arch-enemy of Jayalalitha, the AIADMK general secretary, stepped out of a white Contessa car accompanied by the AIADMK chief, at the party's headquarters in Madras. The crowd that had gathered there was caught between conflicting emotions. They hailed the lady as a "*puratchi thalavi*" (revolutionary leader) and jeered at Veerappan.

After conferring with Jayalalitha at her Poes Gardens bungalow for about 45 minutes that morning, Veerappan accompanied her to the party office where senior functionaries of the AIADMK were waiting for a scheduled

able administrator. His re-entry into the party should be welcomed, she said, because Veerappan brought in prominent followers to strengthen the organisation. And, then, she announced what came as a bolt from the blue to many leaders: she appointed Veerappan as the "joint general secretary" of the party.

"We were aware of the moves to bring him back, but this appointment of Veerappan as the number two in the party has given us a rude jolt," confessed a senior party leader. He was one of the many Jayalalitha loyalists who stood by her when the party split after M.G. Ramachandran's (MGR) death and Veerappan teamed up with MGR's widow, Janaki, and fought the January elections as her rival. Speculated another leader: "Jayalalitha has decided to quit politics and has reached a settlement with her erstwhile rival in order to hand over the reins of the party to him."

It was not long ago that Jayalalitha had termed Veerappan as her "personal enemy" while describing even M. Karunanidhi, the present chief minister, as only "a political rival". Likewise, Veerappan had called her a fourth-rate



Veerappan (left) and Jayalalitha: united they stand

meeting with Jayalalitha. The meeting had been postponed from the previous day to suit Veerappan's astrological compunctions.

In a short speech delivered at the meeting, Jayalalitha made it clear that she was still the boss and that no one should rush to the press to give individual statements that did not have her approval. She also advised her partymen to bury the bitterness they harboured towards Veerappan and acknowledge the fact that the former minister was an

woman" and a "virus that was destroying the party". Though it is likely that Jayalalitha and Veerappan decided to join hands because they realised that a divided house would not sustain them politically for long, Veerappan's appointment as the joint general secretary has raised many an eyebrow. But it is left to be seen whether Veerappan, who began his career as MGR's studio manager decades ago, will ultimately replace Jayalalitha in the AIADMK.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Back to Bofors

India negotiates indigenous production of the Bofors gun with the Swedish firm

DEFENCE

Hordes of press reporters might not have been waiting for them in the Maurya Hotel lobby, but the visit of a top-level team from Bofors was significant nonetheless.

This time, the publicity given to the visit of the Swedes was low, probably because the government wanted to do some quiet business. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had indicated in his interview with SUNDAY in November 1988 that his government had several options to clear itself of the controversies which

agreement entered into in 1986, the Indian government was to decide on whether it would go in for more imports or commence indigenous production of the guns after the delivery of 200 howitzers. The Bofors team was apparently invited to negotiate the terms for the gun's indigenisation, keeping in mind the price escalation that has taken place since the first contract was signed. According to sources, the public sector giant, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has been tipped off for manufacturing the howitzer guns. Though the details of the contract are not known, it is understood that land has already been earmarked for setting up a manufacturing unit for the gun and its peripherals. The Bofors team was also informed about the defects that showed up while the gun was being tested and problems the Indian army was facing in procuring



The Bofors gun: going Indian

trailed its contract with Bofors for the 155mm howitzer guns. The first option was to terminate the contract, which, he said, "was hardly worth it". The second was to ask the company to return the Rs 64 crores which it is alleged to have paid as kickbacks for securing the order. That option, the Prime Minister stated, was "still open". And the third option, which Rajiv Gandhi did not comment upon, was to bury the hatchet and fulfil the contractual agreements with Bofors.

It seems the government has decided to opt for the third solution since neither the press nor the Opposition has been able to conclusively pin down the government on the Bofors scandal—even the exposes in *The Hindu* left far too many questions unanswered. And now, under pressure from the army, the government invited Bofors to New Delhi again to negotiate a further agreement.

According to the Rs 1,400-crore

its ammunition.

The government would surely have drawn flak from the Opposition had the defence ministry decided to import more of the controversial gun. However, there was a lot of speculation when the team was in Delhi about the government negotiating the purchase of other equipments from Bofors. But the doubts were laid to rest as the government did not deny a report, appearing in the front page of a daily, on the its efforts to begin indigenous production of the gun.

It remains to be seen if there is something startling for the government to announce like, for instance, the Bofors' readiness to return part of the Rs 64 crores which it paid as kickbacks, but prefers to term them "winding up charges". If there is any such thing in the government's kitty, the information coup can only be expected on the eve of the election.

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi



Indians at the festival: earning a bad name

Rumpus at Pyongyang

Congress(I) delegates misbehave at the youth meet in North Korea

CONGRESS(I)

What is common between Nagpur, Moscow and Pyongyang? All three cities have had to cope with hordes of unruly young Congressmen who descended on them to

take part in one festival or the other. But at the eight-day 13th International Youth Festival held in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang a rumbustious lot disgraced the organisation they represented and embarrassed the hosts by breaking all previous records.

A major controversy is raging in the Congress(I) over the shameful manner in which the delegates of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) and the All India Youth Congress (AIYC) carried themselves at Pyongyang. Taruna Gujar, a joint secretary of the AIYC from Gujarat, has lodged a written complaint with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, accusing Attar Singh Tokas, another AIYC joint secretary, of misbehaviour,



molestation and manhandling. This has created considerable tension among the NSUI and AIYC leadership, who are busy looking for alibis and scapegoats.

Gujar told SUNDAY that Tokas made some slanderous remarks about her when she was preparing to take part in a cultural programme at India Club on 5 July. "Tokas went about saying that I had an intimate relationship with Rajesh Pilot, Union minister of state for surface transport. This infuriated me and I challenged him to prove things. Instead of doing that, he held my hand, saying that he knew all the secrets. I retaliated by slapping him and, at that, Tokas pounced on me like a wild beast and beat me up. I was shell-shocked. He would have torn my clothes had it not been for some foreign delegates who came to my rescue," said Gujar.

In her letter to Rajiv Gandhi, Gujar has demanded the expulsion of Tokas from the party. She has also complained

There are rumours that heads of some of the NSUI and AIYC leaders are going to roll in view of Rajiv Gandhi's emphasis on party discipline and good conduct during the election year

that when she brought the incident to the notice of Mukul Wasnik, MP and AIYC president, he tried to hush it up by saying that "it was a family matter and would best be settled within the family".

Wasnik feels that the incident was being "exaggerated by the press and certain members of the Opposition". Wasnik admits that he had received Gujar's complaint in Pyongyang itself but thought it would be better to take it up after returning to India instead of making themselves a laughing stock at an international meet. Wasnik says that he has asked both Gujar and Tokas to file their versions of the story in writing and has promised to punish the guilty. Tokas was not, however, available for comments.

Wasnik wondered why the incident was being highlighted and the real achievements overlooked. "This festival has been taking place since 1947 and India has been taking part regularly and this was the first time Kim-Il Sung, president of the host country, visited the Indian tent and spent 30 minutes with us. India has also been elected the chairman of the Non-Aligned youth movement. Then, at the reception of the heads of delegates, there were only two speakers—one from the host country and the other from India," he said.

Wasnik categorically denied all other charges of eve-teasing, drunken brawls and hooliganism levelled by some Opposition members against the Congress(I) delegates. Nor was there any truth, he said, in the allegation that Congressmen had misbehaved with the female staff of Aeroflot, the Soviet airlines. He also rebutted as malicious charges that the daughter of a British participant and two Korean women were molested and that the AIYC members sang obscene songs in public places. Nor was Wasnik willing to grant that a Telugu Desam delegate from Andhra Pradesh was beaten up by Congress(I) MPs and that his camera was snatched away for trying to photograph some AIYC revellers. The fact, he said, was that the Congress(I) members helped him to get a duplicate of his identity card which he had lost.

But the result of this festival of peace, solidarity and friendship has not been good for the NSUI and the AIYC. There are rumours that heads of some of the senior leaders are going to roll in view of Congress(I) president Rajiv Gandhi's emphasis on party discipline and good conduct in the election year. No wonder the leaders of the two Congress(I) frontal organisations are in a black mood, now that the fun and games are over.

Alka Saxena/New Delhi

The killing fields

A new band of tribal guerrillas goes on the rampage by looting villages and killing people

TRIPURA

When TNV (Tripura National Volunteers) guerrillas, led by Bijoy Hrangkhawl, bade farewell to arms last year and returned to normal life from their jungle hide-outs, the state heaved a sigh of relief. But the modalities of surrender which the government had worked out con-



S. R. Barman: unconcerned

tained the seeds of future insurgency. Though the number of hardcore cadres of the TNV never exceeded 150 the government accepted the surrender of 437 tribals, whom Hrangkhawl had certified as TNV activists. Many of them were merely TNV sympathisers or collaborators and Hrangkhawl's motive was clearly to build up his own image by making government aid available to them.

But Hrangkhawl's move bred its own contradiction. Led by Kala Debbarma, about 40 TNV sympathisers who found themselves left out of the deal, banded themselves into a new outfit called the Tripura National Liberation Front (TNLF), in December last year. Their battle-cry, like that of the TNV, was "independent Tripura", but their real demand was jobs for themselves. After a brief spell of gun-snatching, looting and

killings, 19 TNLF activists surrendered on 4 February after being promised employment by the government, but went into hiding again when the jobs failed to materialise. After another round of violence 14 TNLF activists who had surrendered earlier, decided to lay down arms before home minister Samir Ranjan Barman on 19 May. But Kala Debbarna and other hardcore elements remained underground and stepped up their activities. They killed three tribals who had refused them shelter and food, abducted 16 others and looted three village markets in the month of June, reviving memories of a TNV mayhem. The only difference was that the tribals were at the receiving end this time.

The spate of violence drew sharp reactions from the leading Opposition party, the CPI(M), which enjoys a large tribal following, and also from tribal organisations such as the TUJS (Tripura Upajati Juba Samity) and the TNV. In fact, the TUJS, which happens to be an ally of the Congress(I) in the state's coalition government, came down heavily on home minister Barman and the state police for having failed to contain the TNLF. Complained TUJS joint secretary, Anuyo Debbarna, at a press conference: "The police are just not keen on fighting the TNLF. They look the other way when our men report the presence of TNLF activists. We wonder if this is a political gesture." Repeated appeals to Barman had not yielded results, he added.

The police decided to act after the TUJS made the public accusation. They gunned down one tribal youth and arrested three others at Dangabari, saying they were TNLF activists. But senior intelligence officers doubt the veracity of the police claim. "It seems the group hit by the police was a border-hopping band. We have identified only two members of its core, but they do not seem to have any connection with the TNLF," said one official.

Of the two persons arrested one was Trinayan Jamatia, who has interesting antecedents. He was originally a Naxalite who had formed the Lama Koutal (New Path), an underground organisation, but decided to lie low after that. Intelligence sources said that Jamatiya was held by the Bangladesh Rifles in May, but was later released on the condition that he spied on the Shanti Bahini, an armed outfit of the Chakma rebels, operating on the India-Bangladesh border. So, the police, apparently, is still not on the right track and the TNLF continues to enjoy a nuisance value at the expense of the poor tribals of the state.

Subir Bhaumick/Agartala

Return of the prodigal

The Goa Congress merges with the Congress(I) eight years after it split from the ruling party



GOA

Strange are the games politicians play. After much speculation, the Congress(I) has finally readmitted into its fold Dr Wilfred D'Souza, who had walked out of the party eight years ago to form his own regional outfit—the Goa Congress (GC)—to champion the interests of the local Konkane.

The entry of the GC into the Congress(I) came about not long after the two parties hurled a series of accusations at each other. The Congress(I) branded the GC as communal after it carried in a procession the body of a GC worker murdered by the Shiv Sena, while D'



Wilfred D'Souza: back to the old fold

Souza accused the Congress(I) government of protecting the interests of the Shiv Sena. However, Sulochana Katkar, Goa Pradesh Congress(I) Committee president who had once accused D' Souza of being communal, said after the merger, "There are black sheep in every party. We have accepted the GC as a whole because the ideology of the GC is the same as that of the Congress(I)." On the other hand, D'Souza told

Patnaik and the press

The Press Council censures the government of Orissa

Chief minister J.B. Patnaik never tires of telling people that he is a friend of the press; he also never grows bored of baiting journalists. The government of J.B. Patnaik—who happens to be the state's longest-surviving chief minister—has piled up several cases in which journalists were harassed by the administration and is the only regime

in the state since Independence to have been censured by the Press Council of India.

Patnaik, who was himself a journalist before he turned a politician, is at peace with the press so long as it stops short of exposing the skeletons in the government's cupboard. Efforts to highlight the corruption in the administration or among members of the ruling party invariably invite the regime's ire.

The latest stricture of the council against the state government was issued in the first week of this month in which it was criticised for having failed to ensure the security of journalists and safeguard their dignity.

The council's censure came in connection with a case involving Ramesh Chandra Mishra, the Keonjhar correspondent of the Orissa daily, *Dharitri*. Mishra had reported on the corruption and high-handedness prevailing in the local police set-up. Incensed by the report, the police framed Mishra on criminal charges, had him handcuffed, and paraded him



J.B. Patnaik

► SUNDAY: "I criticised the government, not the party. It may be madness to rejoin a party I once left. But there is a method in the madness the GC adopts."

D'Souza said the merger—which took place on 22 June—was prompted by the threat posed by the Shiv Sena and the proposed coming together of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), the Marathi Rajyabhasha Prasthapan Samiti and other pro-Maratha forces which wanted to fight the polls on a communal plank. "We must have a secular front to combat these forces, and the Congress(I) could be this front," explained D'Souza.

Contrary to AICC(I) general secretary V.N. Gadgil's claim that the merger was unconditional, reliable sources say that the GC had set several preconditions for the merger, the foremost among them being a special status for Goa, lifting of cases against Konkani activists filed by the government during the language agitation of 1987, granting of unemployment allowances to the unemployed, social security for the aged and guaranteeing that the MGP will not be permitted to merge with the Congress(I).

Bosco Eremita D'Souza/Goa

on the streets. The council expressed its shock at the treatment meted out to him and refused to accept the government's plea that the journalist was handcuffed because he had put up a resistance. The council also hauled up the government for handcuffing another newsman, Sanjay Kumar Bhatta, editor of the Chatrapur-based magazine, *Pratipaksha*.

In 1986, the Press Council reprimanded the state government for failing to prevent attacks on the vehicles of Orissa's largest-selling daily, *Samaja* allegedly by workers of the ruling party, and depriving it of its legitimate share of government advertisements. The council's repeated strictures has blown the myth about Patnaik's being a champion of press freedom. Though the number of dailies published from the state has gone up from eight to 16 during his rule, it is no real index of Patnaik's attitude towards the fourth estate. Most newspaper owners and newsmen have learnt by now that the good times last as long as they turn a blind eye towards the seamy side of the administration and play up the government's 'achievements'. All hell breaks loose if they dare to be more venturesome.

Sarada P. Nanda / Bhubaneswar

Banking on embankments

The state plans to reinforce and raise the height of 3,000 km of bunds to prevent floods

BIHAR Water—sometimes too much of it—has always posed a problem for farmers in Bihar. For, around August/September every year, with unremitting regularity, according to state irrigation minister Krishnanand Jha, over 60 lakh hectares of land (that is around 20 per cent of the country's flood prone area of 340 lakh hectares) have to face the fury of floods.

kilometres of embankments constructed to prevent floods over a hundred years ago. The minister has also identified the most vulnerable points in the embankments and has instituted intensive patrolling along the earthen dams and embankments. Canals and barrages have been constructed, the foremost among them being the one at Badhmara on the Kosi river.

Will all these measures save the state from the floods? This is the question that is being asked by many in Bihar. Irrigation minister Krishnanand Jha is certain it will. According to him, his department has already completed 70 per cent of the flood control construction work. Bureaucrats have already been given specific tasks and those who have not given an account of the work done by them have been moved out. Corruption



Labourers repairing an embankment: uphill task

The situation was at its worst in August 1987. The levels of water in the major rivers rose to an all-time high in the first two weeks of the month with Purnea receiving a total of 731 mm of rainfall against the normal of 240 mm. Many experts are of the view that while floods in the state cannot really be avoided, their effect can certainly be minimised. What was therefore needed was a long-term flood control plan. So, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi announced that a technological mission for flood and drought control had been formed, it was welcomed by some and criticised by others. Among the mission's foremost critics was the president of the Bihar State Kisan Sabha, Bhogendra Jha. He issued a statement that the formation of the mission was nothing but a farce.

Despite the harsh words, a beginning has been made by the state authorities. In the lead is irrigation minister Jha. He has drawn up plans to strengthen and raise the height of over 3,000-odd

which has plagued the department has been checked considerably after some bureaucrats were given their marching orders.

These measures have found approval. Amalendu Satyavarti, the chairman of the Bihar State Irrigation Cooperative Federation Ltd., an apex body, said: "Bihar's irrigation system has broken down due to the corrupt bureaucracy and the contractors. Though irrigation minister Jha is honest and has announced a massive programme to control the floods in northern Bihar, he has very little time at his disposal. Moreover, the government should go ahead and take our help to solve the problems of the farmers." Moreover, there is the major hurdle of negotiating with Nepal, from where most of the rivers originate. In view of the present tense relations, no talks can be held with Nepal. Even so, irrigation minister Jha and the Bihar government deserve credit for the work already done.

Tirthankar Ghosh/Patna

The guns of Gaya

Bihar is a virtual armoury of illegal weapons

Political power in Bihar flows from the barrel of a gun. In a state where might is right, political parties depend more on firepower than on the support of the masses to see them through during elections. Small wonder then that the manufacture of illegal arms is a thriving business in Bihar. And with the general elections round the corner, illegal arms manufacturing units have mushroomed throughout the state.

Barely 60 km from Patna is the infamous Gaya district, the nerve-centre of the illegal weapons trade. In almost every village of the district, the local blacksmith's hearth has been converted into an arms-making unit. And, thanks to the politicians of both the ruling party and the Opposition, they are never short of orders.

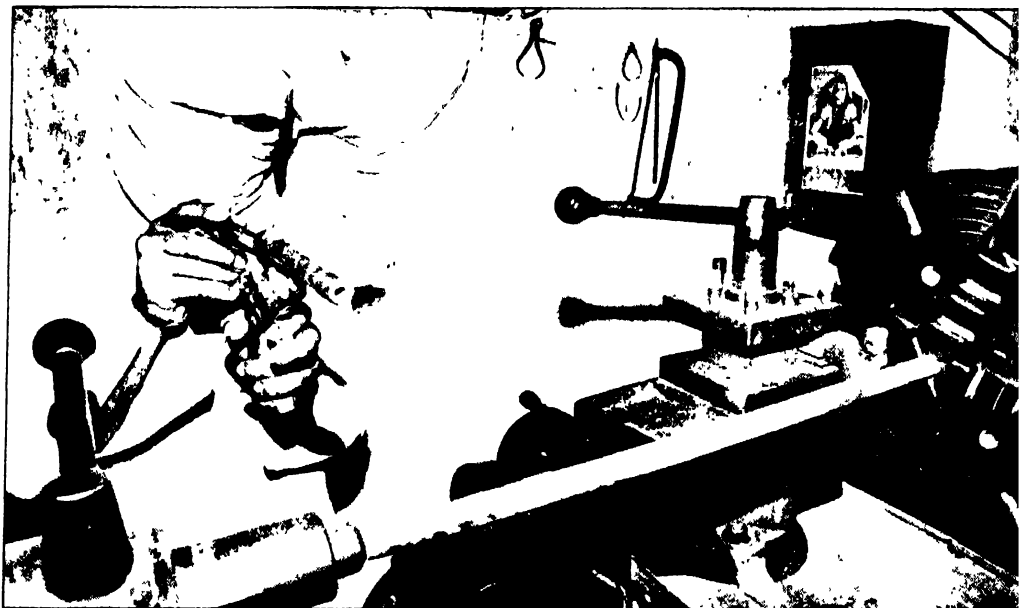
To a casual visitor, an illegal arms factory may look like any other small-scale engineering unit. The weapons are usually made in between other jobs. And, a lathe machine is all that a skilled worker needs apart from the raw material to manufacture arms. Off the Gaya main road is a small, nondescript village. Krishna Kant Jha (not his real name) was working diligently on a lathe machine, shaping and cutting steel pipes that looked like gun barrels. "We make guns whenever we find time," Jha confided, adding, "but we are scared of the police. If we are caught, we have to spend a couple of years in jail."

The risks notwithstanding, scores of blacksmiths like Jha from the districts of Gaya, Aurangabad, Jehanabad, Munger and Patna are clandestinely carrying on the trade because of the phenomenal profits: more than 50 per cent for every

gun sold. The profits invariably go up during elections since the demand for weapons far exceeds supply. For example, Jha has so far received orders for 1,000 guns from the Congress party. The CPI too has placed an order for 500 pistols with Jha. "It is not always that the political parties pay up for the guns they take from me. But this is part of the

trade and we do not protest since it invariably means inviting trouble," Jha said.

The bleak employment scenario in Bihar is luring more and more educated young men into the illegal weapons business. Take the case of Rameswar. A graduate in science, Rameswar initially looked around for jobs for a couple of



K M KISHAN



K M KISHAN

years. He even approached politicians but they all turned a deaf ear to his pleas. Finally, Rameswar, like many others, started manufacturing crude arms. And, with his political contacts which he picked up during his unemployed days, he was never short of clients. His single-largest buyer is the Congress(I) which has recently placed an order for 4,000 guns. "Sometimes I feel that I am not doing the right thing. But it is the politicians who want us to remain in the trade. There is no getting out of it once you have entered the business," lamented Rameswar. But others are not as remorseful.

The establishment is equally to blame for the mushrooming of illegal arms manufacturing units. Within the fort area

The manufacturing of illegal weapons is a thriving business in Bihar. The administration, however, prefers to look the other way due to political pressure

always difficult to pin down the kingpin as political parties and politicians rarely associate themselves directly with the arms agents. Most of the orders are placed through middlemen.

Bihar. An unofficial survey done in 1988 has revealed the disturbing fact that there are over 1,500 illegal weapons manufacturing units in the state. Of these around 1,100 are in central Bihar alone. Among the districts, Nalanda tops the list with 488 illegal units followed by Gaya (225 units) and Munger (204 units).

The question that has troubled most social workers in Bihar is: why are more and more people taking up this dangerous and risky business? According to Dr Satyanand Sharma, Janata Dal leader and president of the Bihar Vishwakarma Mahasabha, there is a social angle to the problem. Said Sharma: "The blacksmiths (of the Lohar caste) do not have the resources to make weapons. It is the



(Clockwise from facing page) The ordinary village blacksmith has perfected the art of gun-making; a lathe machine is all that a skilled worker needs to manufacture fire arms; raids are often carried out leading to the recovery of unlicensed weapons but the kingpins of the trade remain unperturbed

in Munger, there are as many as 36 registered weapons factories. According to official sources, there should be at least 2,000 workers employed with these units. The fact however is otherwise: only 775 people find work. To make up for the shortage of personnel, owners of arms factories hand over contracts to private entrepreneurs. And, most of these are illegal.

It is not that the administration is unaware of this thriving business. Often, raids are carried out but they are more routine exercises rather than an attempt to strike at the roots of the illegal trade. In 1985, for instance, just before the elections, the police sealed a number of factories making guns and other fire-arms. But the cops beat a hasty retreat after it was found that many of these units were funded and run by ministers and ruling party MLAs. In any case, it is

As a result, the state is a virtual armoury of unlicensed weapons. The large number of gun factories in Munger has only added to the problem. Often, a worker who has mastered the art of making weapons, quits his job and sets up his own unit as the returns are very high. And, over the years, the skilled worker has passed on the art of making guns to the ordinary village blacksmith. The result is that in Bihar today, every conceivable kind of gun is manufactured illegally: from the sophisticated machine and sten guns to the crude pipe and chain guns. A senior police officer in Patna admitted that an illegal arms manufacturer is capable of even duplicating the Scott and Webley revolver to the last screw.

The quick profits and political patronage have ensured that gun manufacturing is the most stable cottage industry in

rich and the powerful who make them to do such things. After all, my people have to stay alive and the only way they can do so is by manufacturing weapons. Today, most of the village blacksmiths have no work. The agricultural tools which they used to make are now being manufactured by industrial houses."

Most blacksmiths feel the same. Neglect and poverty have forced them into the illegal business. The apathy of the government has only made them more daring. Lamented Dr Sharma: "The Bihar government spends huge amounts for the other cottage industries of the state. But no one cares for the blacksmiths. It is the government which has forced them into the illegal arms trade."

Is chief minister S.N. Sinha listening?

Tirthankar Ghosh/Patna



BOOK EXTRACT

The Muslim dilemma

All plural societies, except those using segregation as a strategy, have only two options available to them for handling problems of multi-ethnicity. One, to recognise, accept and institutionalise such plurality and, two, to eliminate it through the process of social and cultural assimilation. Assimilation involves the abandonment by ethnic minorities, whether based on race, religion, language or caste, of their own social mores and cultural identity in favour of the value system, the lifestyle and the ethos of the dominant group. The pluralist solution, on the other hand, seeks to preserve ethnic distinctiveness through, what Schermerhorn has called, sanctioned autonomy. This is autonomy for ethnic groups in the areas of religious and cultural life but within the framework of common economic and

Only a pluralist political system would enable Muslims to retain their identity in secular India, writes Bashiruddin Ahmad

political institutions.

As against segregation, both assimilation and sanctioned autonomy are forms of ethnic integration. But rarely is assimilation total or sanctioned autonomy complete; in each case there is always some element of the other. The two categories, in fact, describe the direction of the relationship between an ethnic group and its envioning society

rather than denoting an exclusive condition of group existence.

Whether a society opts for an arrangement of sanctioned autonomy for ethnic groups or their assimilation, depends on a number of factors. These include the number and size of the ethnic groups, the degree of their territorial concentration or dispersal, the relative distribution of material and political resources among them and the traditions of conflict and cooperation characterising their relations. Since these factors are not constant across ethnic groups, some among them are more satisfied by assimilation, others by autonomy.

In either case integration of an ethnic group is not a function of just what that group wants. While this does matter, what is more important is the kind of relationship the dominant group prefers



Muslims congregate on Calcutta's Red Road to offer Id prayers: a matter of faith

a minority to have with the larger social system. If there is a congruence of views on this between the two, integration becomes possible, otherwise it remains problematic.

Between the assimilationist and pluralist strategies for handling problems of multi-ethnicity, India has opted for the latter. The Constitution envisages a system which seeks to promote political unification of the society while giving the ethnic groups in it a wide range of rights to preserve and develop their own distinct cultures. Important particularly for religious minorities are those provisions of the Constitution which deal with the right of freedom of religion. Religious groups are not only given the freedom to pursue their religion but also the right to propagate it. Additionally, they have the right to manage their own religious affairs and to establish and maintain institutions for imparting religious instruction. The latter are also entitled to receive financial assistance from the State.

The Constitution also provides for specific cultural and educational rights

for all ethnic minorities. These include the right of minorities to conserve their distinct languages, scripts and culture and the 'right to establish and administer educational institutions (in addition to institutions for religious instruction) of their own choice.'

Besides devising an arrangement of autonomy in religious and cultural spheres for ethnic communities, the Constitution does two things. One, it seeks to ameliorate social impediments, which might be associated with the ethnic affiliations of individuals. For this it guarantees everyone equal protection before the law and prohibits discrimination against any citizen in the matter of public employment and the use of public places and institutions on the ground of his religion, race, caste, sex or place of residence. Two, it guarantees civic rights to vote, free speech, association and freedom from arrest to all citizens, thereby creating the basic conditions without which neither individuals, nor social groups can either articulate or hope effectively to protect their interests.

The privileges took the form of reservation of seats in the legislature, separate electorates and extensive representation in the bureaucracy and other services for them. It was essentially a model in which ethnic groups were treated as distinct entities in matters of culture and religion and as basic units for the purposes of the organisation and operation of the polity. But with the exception of 'protective discrimination' provisions for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, which include reservation of seats in the legislature, the present Constitution clearly rejects the British India model. Instead, it establishes a system which rests on the principle of political equality of all citizens as indi-

viduals coupled with a commitment to the protection of religious and cultural rights of the minority communities.

No Constitution, however, can resolve complex social problems all by itself; it merely provides a normative basis for their resolution. The task of resolving social problems is ultimately that of politics. It does so by translating the broad normative statements of the Constitution into concrete policies and

actions. In an open polity like ours the political realm, however, is above the realm of public preferences and pressures, with those in power compelled to act within the constraints of public opinion. As such, finding solutions to complex problems necessarily becomes a matter of social consensus.

This has precisely been the problem in relation to the integration of the Muslims in India. In spite of the Constitution providing the basic framework, the necessary consensus has been lacking due to persistence among the dominant majority and the Muslims of suspicion and fear and negative beliefs about each other sustained primarily by memories of the near and distant past. These are basically memories of an adversary relationship characterised throughout by conflict and confrontation and by a sense of humiliation and injured pride in one group or the other at different points in time. With each of the two groups having experienced reversal in their status roles at different times, their relationship ultimately took the form of a 'destiny conflict', though in the eyes—mainly of the Muslim middle class and the Hindu chauvinists.

As a consequence, the Muslims in particular became, from the late nineteenth century, an embattled community bent on retrieving their lost status, suspicious of all 'outsiders' and inclined to see in the actions of others a well designed conspiracy to frustrate Muslim aspirations and harm Muslim interests. Pakistan was the logical outcome of such a frame of mind.

But if the creation of Pakistan satisfied the sub-continental Muslims' dream of regaining lost supremacy, it

also made large numbers of them who remained in India a minority, with nothing except the psychological baggage of the pre-Partition days bequeathed to them. Not ideologically equipped to cope with the new situation in which they were neither the rulers nor the beneficiaries of special privileges of the kind given to them by the British, large sections of them remained captives of their old attitudes,

As against segregation, both assimilation and sanctioned authority are forms of ethnic integration. But rarely is assimilation total or sanctioned autonomy complete

fears and prejudices, paralysed additionally by 'minority panic' and anxiety about their future.

They were, furthermore, 'a minority acutely blamed by the Hindus for the partition of the country, a minority regarded as representative of an anti-Indian, hostile, divisive, and subversive influence which had shattered the aspirations for national unity'. The sense of bitterness produced by partition in India was so great that even a person with such impeccable liberal credentials as Acharya Kripalani reportedly opposed, at the time of the first general elections, giving Muslims the right to vote. At the popular level, Partition in fact gave rise to the feeling that, having got a State of their own in Pakistan, Muslims had no grounds for complaining about their conditions or talking of their interests in India.

Under the circumstances, the ability of politics to handle the problem of Muslim integration was necessarily impaired. Because of strongly negative public opinion, direct Muslim participation in politics was problematic, for it would have only aggravated the majority's suspicion of Muslim divisiveness. The Muslim League was revived but only in the south and that too much against the wishes of the community's leaders elsewhere in the country. For the same reason, it became difficult for the central government to give substance to the constitutional provisions seeking to conserve the cultural distinctiveness of ethnic minorities including the Muslims.

For instance, persistent efforts under Nehru to persuade states with sizeable Muslim populations to implement the safeguards and recommendations of the Language Statement of 1958 (about Urdu) produced no results. In fact it was only in 1973 that some of the recommendations for Urdu which Nehru and the Congress wanted to implement were actually put into practice and those too only in UP and Bihar.

Such difficulty in giving substance to the provisions of the Constitution relating to the cultural, educational and religious interests of the Muslims is often attributed to opposition from Hindu extremists. Hindu extremism is indeed a fact and not an unimportant one. But it does not, by itself, explain the reluctance of the government(s) to translate the various guarantees of the Constitution into concrete acts of policy. The more important factor has been the ambivalence among the Hindus who are neither communal nor obscurantist about the best way of actualising the autonomy envisaged by the Constitu-

tion. Most of them are convinced of the need to help the Muslims preserve their religious and cultural distinctiveness but they are also worried that the measures required to make this possible will only reinforce Muslim separatism.

This is a dilemma which most multi-ethnic societies operating a pluralist strategy of integration face. There are no tried and tested ways of resolving it, certainly none which are valid for all social and historical contexts. Each society must find its own solution to this dilemma. There is though an added sense of poignancy attached to it for us, given the antecedent experience of pre-Partition politics. That is presumably why some suggest modifying the Constitution's pluralist strategy through a restrictive redefinition of the areas of

minority autonomy, particularly in matters of culture and education.

The assumption underlying this view is that Muslim separatism arose out of and is still sustained by the existence of Muslim cultural institutions, be they the *madrassas*, the Urdu medium schools, the Aligarh Muslim University or even the Muslim Personal Law. There may be some truth in that. But the greater truth is that most of these institutions do not figure in the day-to-day life of the vast majority of Indian Muslims. The *madrassas* are not the main agents of religious socialisation for the Muslims; an overwhelming majority of Muslim school-going children are not found in the Urdu medium school but in the school system run by the State, and Aligarh University is certainly not the



place where a majority of the Muslim youth receive higher education.

Obviously, there is more to the strength of Muslim identity and solidarity than the existence of separate institutions. Both are products of a particular historical context and in all probability they are likely to persist even after any structural alterations are effected in the areas of Muslim cultural and educational life. The reason why this point is often overlooked is because all lists of Muslim demands ritually emphasise issues like state-aid to Muslim schools, the minority-character of Aligarh, privileged status for Urdu and no State-sponsored changes in Muslim Personal Law. But if, as we noted earlier, continuance of most of these institutions

The Partition resulted in a reversal of status roles for the Indian Muslims. It necessarily entailed a major diminution in their power and influence, more than for any other group

is not of material consequence for the bulk of the Muslims, then it becomes obvious that these issues have become essentially symbolic in character. They represent the community's search for self-respect, a hankering for recognition and for unmistakable evidence that the equation of power in the new polity of India does not exclude them.

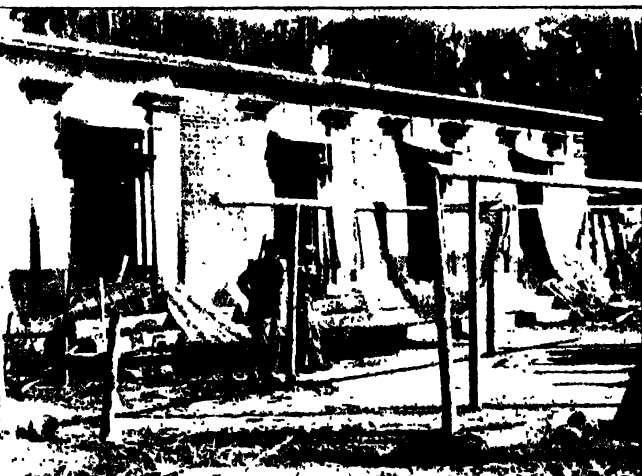
The Partition resulted, as noted earlier, in a reversal of status roles for the Indian Muslims. It necessarily entailed a major diminution in their power and influence, more than for any other ethnic group. For the Muslims, 'Partition marked the end of an era' with much of their established political leadership gone and 'with no clear signposts for the future'. As Cantwell Smith has noted, in situations where the Muslim community's power is greatly reduced or totally destroyed, it turns from worldly to religious preoccupations and the Ulama emerge as the custodians of its interests.

This is precisely what happened with sectarian organisations like the Tablighi Jamaat-e-Islami attracting increasing support, in the period after 1947, from different segments of the Muslim community. The prime objective of both these organisations has been 'to sustain and strengthen the believers in the practice of their religion'. This objective reflects the persistent belief shared by all Muslim fundamentalists that worldly setbacks experienced by the community are the result of its departure from the path of true Islam.

As against these groups, the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-e-Hind offered a political formulation more conducive to the promotion of Muslim acceptance of the legitimacy of Indian State and to their involvement in its politics. A product of the Khilafat movement, the Jamiat, in a radical departure from the traditional position of the orthodox establishment, accepted the notion of territorial nationalism, rejecting the notion of there being "any clash between Indian Independence and the interests of Islam, either in general or in India in particular". Consequently, they opposed the demand for Pakistan and supported the Indian National Congress.

The Ulama of the Jamiat were, of course, no radicals either in social affairs or matters of religion. They did not stand for the abandonment of religious identity of the Muslims. That is why even during the course of the national movement, they presumably favoured a State structure which would preserve communal identities rather than obliterate them.

When Independence came, in striking



Partition

(Clockwise from left) A devastated part of Calcutta in the 1946 riots; decomposed bodies on a Calcutta alley; bloodbath; Kripalani (extreme left) Nehru, Mountbatten and Jinnah (extreme right); opting for partition; a ravaged East Pakistan town in 1971; exploding the two-nation theory

contrast to the position taken by the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Jamiat took the position 'hat the Muslims should 'abjure communal politics,' dissolve all political bodies of a communal character and instead participate in politics through the existing non-sectarian parties.

It is difficult to determine how influential the Jamiat's viewpoint has been. But the fact is that whether out of choice or necessity the participation of the Muslims in the country's politics has occurred mainly through secular national parties, especially the Congress. More than any other party, it was the Congress which, in the early years after the Partition, tried to infuse in the Muslims a sense of political activism and efficacy. It was a policy of tutelage but nevertheless such tutelage was especially vital to a community like the Muslims, badly dis-oriented by Partition and vulnerable to the appeals of a fundamentalist ideology like that of the Jamaat-e-Islami. After their initial hesitation was shed under the protective Congress umbrella, the Muslims found that the logic of competitive politics helped them to further their interests because of their numbers.

That is why despite exhortations from some sections of the Ulema, particularly in the early years, Muslim participation in politics has consistently increased over the years. Whether it is voting in elections, standing for public office, election campaigning, membership of political parties or contacting government officials, the percentage of the Muslims engaged in all such political activities is, at each level of social and economic status, as large as that of the Hindus.

In a democratic system these are the very ways through which individuals and groups seek to influence the conduct of public affairs. Such increasing political participation of all kinds among the Muslims suggests that they find active involvement in competitive politics not unrewarding. Substantial segments of the Muslim elites (64 per cent) and non-elites (57 per cent) now believe that non-Muslim political parties are sympathetic to Muslim needs and interests. Both groups also perceive that the government is contributing to the welfare of the Indian people including the Muslims and it does so in more or less the same proportion as their Hindu counterparts.

For the sake of brevity, I am presenting the percentages of those among the Muslim elites and non-elites who felt that Muslim culture was threatened, by only two extreme categories of political satisfaction index:



If the creation of Pakistan satisfied the sub-continental Muslims' dream of regaining lost supremacy, it also made large numbers of them who remained in India a minority, with nothing except the psychological baggage of the pre-Partition days bequeathed to them

Perceiving threat to culture

(Per cent)

	Non-elites	Elites
Politically: Dissatisfied	84.4	92.6
Satisfied	38.0	40.9

In presenting these data the intention, however, is not to suggest that there are no attitudinal barriers any more within the Muslim community, to integration. At the level of political orientations of the kind discussed here, there is evidence of a Muslim preference for the kind of institutional arrangements for which there is no Hindu support in the country.

For instance, almost half the Muslim non-elites think that the Muslims should have their own party. The Muslim elites, however, do not hold this view;



Identity

(Clockwise from above)
 Ramjanmabhoomi or Babri Masjid?
 members of the Babri Masjid Action Committee stage a dharna before the PM's house:
 defending the faith;
 the Calcutta Madrasah College and Aligarh Muslim University: identity through education

only one out of three among them want a separate Muslim party. But the Muslim elites are more unhappy than the non-elites on the issue of adequate Muslim representation. As against 39 per cent among the non-elites who believe that the present system does not provide fair representation to the Muslims, the percentage among the Muslim elites holding this view is 67. However, among both groups, those dissatisfied in this regard want reservation of seats as the corrective for the situation.

It may be that these are only pragmatic responses to real life experiences, devoid of any ideological content. Or they may reflect the persistence and influence in sections of the Muslims of the ideology of ethnic corporatism. In either case, given the opposition of the dominant Hindus to reserved seats and religion-based Muslim parties, such minority attitudes reveal the gaps in

consensus between the two on the rules of the political game. And, yet, it is necessary to recognise that the process of open and competitive politics has helped raise the low level of consensus between the majority and the minority found in the initial years after Partition to a more satisfactory level. There is little doubt that many other factors outside competitive politics and the open polity have also been material in this regard. But as M.G. Smith points out, when societal consensus is lacking, political institutions play a major role in social unification.

Indian Muslims are, of course, not just another religious minority in the country and not only because of their size. Their affiliation is to a religion which is not ethnic as Hinduism and Sikhism and sets them apart. Their position is different even from that of the Indian Christians, for Islam has not undergone the process of 'secularisa-

tion' which Christianity has in its metropolitan areas. Islam is still a faith capable of evoking solidarity among its adherents across national boundaries.

There is no hard data to show how intense the Indian Muslims' involvement with Pakistan is or what the basis which primarily sustains it. Familial and religious ties are certainly an important factor. But it is also possible that, at least in some segments of the Indian Muslim community, the basis of this involvement is the persisting commitment to the 'two-nation theory'.

Events often have a way of resolving those problems by creating conditions conducive to their resolution. In the absence of such conditions a society finds it difficult to handle the outstanding problems through normal workings of its institutions. The break-up of Pakistan in 1971 was one such event. If Partition had discredited the 'two-nation' theory at an ideological level in India, the denouncement of 1971 made it a totally non-viable principle for the organisation and legitimacy of politics on the subcontinent.

The *Khilafat* Movement in the pre-partition era was a vivid example of this fact, so was the reaction among Indian Muslims to the *Al Aqsa* mosque incident in the late Sixties. But this is an attachment more to the abstraction of an Islamic *Umma* than to a cohesive, well-structured and organised community of the Faithful. That is why, at a time when the rest of the 'Muslim World' was welcoming the demise of the *Khilafat* in Turkey, the Muslims in India were picking the gauntlet in its sacred defence against the British.

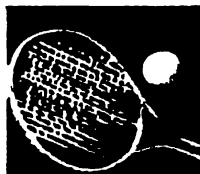
The Indian Muslims' emotional links with the Muslim world are likely to continue. But, given the often conflicting national interests of Muslim States, it is doubtful if these ties will be anything more than a source of vicarious satisfaction and pride for the Indian Muslims.

But there is more than a mere Islamic nexus for the Indian Muslims where Pakistan is concerned. They are involved with that Islamic State through family ties, since most Indian Muslims, particularly those in the Northern States, have a brother or a sister, children or parents there. Their involvement also reflects the fact that Pakistan is as much their creation as that of the Muslims there and that it represents a concrete manifestation of the 'two-nation' theory to which most Muslims had subscribed. ■

Religion, State and Politics in India edited by Moin Shafiq. Published by Ajanta Publications, New Delhi. Price: Rs 350.

A German *blitzkrieg*

Boris Becker and Steffi Graf conquer Wimbledon yet again. And how!



WIMBLEDON '89

The first time the Germans attacked the All England Club, they bombed the Centre Court and left 1,200 seats damaged. That was way back in 1940, during the Second World War. Fortynine years, later, the Germans have attacked again, but this time they just sent a two person hit squad and the only weapons they carried were tennis rackets.

Boris Becker and Steffi Graf—practice partners at age nine and seven respectively—completed a West German double at Wimbledon this year to give their country one of its finest moments in sport yet. But Becker isn't too sure about that, saying, "It may not ever happen again. That depends more on me than her. I think people in my country are going to realise what we have achieved only when we are both a grandfather and grandmother." However, judging from the reaction of one fan who went on to remark, "Yes, these are the stars of our sport. The glorious players have gone from our football. There is no Franz Beckenbauer, no Gerd Muller, only efficiency," one gets the feeling that Becker and Graf won't have to wait till grandparenthood for their countrymen to salute their laurels.

Playing on that hallowed grass rectangle—Centre Court—that he regards as his personal piece of turf, Boris Becker gave the world a lesson in grasscourt tennis when he demolished defending champion Stefan Edberg. Obviously hyped by the revenge factor—Edberg had beaten him in four sets just a year ago on the same occasion—Becker played near-perfect tennis to blitz the shell-shocked Swede in straight sets. The German added insult to injury

when he made Edberg the first player since Jaroslav Drobný to lose a set in a Wimbledon final at love—and that was by Ted Schroeder way back in 1949.

Looking back at his all-consuming victory, Becker felt this one was much more satisfying than the two he notched up in 1985 and 1986. "The early victories were more like a fairy tale," he said, going on to add, "I didn't know what I was doing. But over the last two or three years I had to work much harder than I ever, ever had. So in a way, you know, I feel much more proud now than in my early years."

Edberg, on the other hand, was an unfortunate victim of circumstances. Having peaked in the semi-final against John McEnroe, the Swede had a harrowing time when he faced Becker. Add to

that the misery of playing an opponent who was not capable of doing anything wrong. His dream of retaining the title receding as fast as Becker's backhands kept searing past him, Edberg at least had the consolation of accepting it with dignity. There was none of the racket-throwing foul temper normally associated nowadays with a losing finalist. Instead, with the typically Swedish stoic calm first introduced by a gentleman called Björn Borg and then maintained by his clones, Edberg smiled bravely and made no excuses. Accepting that Becker had played a tremendous match, Edberg said, "It isn't easy to come back as a defending champion, but I have done pretty well. At least I got back into the final."

That was more than what Ivan Lendl and John McEnroe could say for themselves. One hunting for his first Wimbledon title, another looking for his misplaced identity. Both lost to players almost a decade younger than them. While McEnroe had to admit to himself that his genius wasn't enough any more in this arena of acrobats and perfectionists, Lendl needs to spend a little more time with a shrink rather than on court. He still refuses to convince himself that he can play as well as anyone of these whiz-kids on grass. Spreading Becker on the rack, the Czech-born US-settled Ostrava ghost hesitated...and lost.

Also getting a dose of humility was the French Open hero, Michael Chang. Scampering around Roland Garros' red clay courts on his strong Gurkha legs, Chang might have jolted the big guns in Paris. But here, on the temperamental grass of the All England Club, Chang found the pressure too hot to handle. Even his impassive Oriental features couldn't hide the grimace of defeat as he finally ran out of steam against Tim Mayotte.

Steffi Graf: brilliant strokes



If Boris Becker just blanked his final opponent out of the match, his counterpart Steffi Graf preferred to play cat-and-mouse with hers. In yet another repeat of last year's final, Graf took on Martina Navratilova for the first time since she beat her here last year. And showed that she had lost none of her youthful exuberance and talent. If anything, Graf has become stronger...as Navratilova found out to her chagrin.

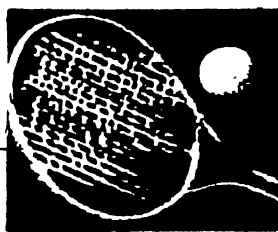
Getting jolted out of her reverie in Paris by a precociously talented and gutsy Spaniard by the name of Arantxa Sanchez, Graf came into this tournament with plenty to prove. The meticulous way in which she dismantled both the newcomers—Monica Seles and Arantxa Sanchez—and then staved off veterans Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova, showed that the Graf fire is far from extinguished.

After racing off to a one-set lead, Steffi Graf almost shifted into neutral as she allowed Navratilova the liberty of a set. Then, just as everyone got onto the edges of their seats, Graf found overdrive again to leave a fast-tiring Navratilova floundering in her exhaust. As if that wasn't awe-inspiring enough, she analyses her own game as yet to reach its true capacity. "There's still some time to come in with my strokes a little bit further. When I practise I just hit much harder and go more for the shots than I do when I go on court. And if I can transfer that a little bit more, then I say I can be much better," she warned her opponents.

Even as she smiled for the battery of cameras and flaunted her tear-spotted trophy, one couldn't but help spare a thought for the defeated Navratilova. Having set her sights on that record ninth Wimbledon title—right now she has eight along with Helen Wills Moody, but Navratilova doesn't believe in sharing, it seems—she even sacrificed this year's French Open to herself fine tune for Wimbledon. Knowing that the adjustment from the French Open clay to the nuances of Wimbledon's grass might make the vital difference, Navratilova preferred to stay in England, honing her grasscourt serve-and-volley game to a razor's edge. But eventually found that Graf had the equip-



Boris Becker: his backhands seared past Edberg



WIMBLEDON '89

Boris Becker played near perfect tennis to blitz defending champion Stefan Edberg in straight sets. Steffi Graf dismantled newcomers Monica Seles and Arantxa Sanchez and then staved off veterans Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova

ment to blunt her.

Accepting that she played as well as she could have on that particular day, Navratilova felt that on another day, another place, the result might be different. However, it's this place—on another day—that she's most interested in. "I'm planning on it, yeah," she told reporters who besieged her with questions of whether she was going to go the Chris Evert way. Talking about Evert, will this be the last time Wimbledon will be graced by the flowing strokes of this sun-bleached blonde beauty? After 18 years of regular attendance, Evert said this might be her last year...probably.

So there it is. All over, even the shouting. And one could notice the uncontained glee as the West German couple—Becker and Graf—displayed their trophies later in unison. Holding Graf tight around the shoulders in a protective, almost possessive, gesture, Becker said, "I'm the guy who knows her longer than anybody. When we were nine and seven, I used to be the worst of the boys and she used to be the best of the girls, so when I was maybe nine and she was seven I all the time had to hit with her. From then on we more or less went to the same tournaments, and all the while we kept a relationship."

Pretty successful relationship that.

Pradeep Paul/London

The write way

Kottayam becomes the first place in India to achieve 100 per cent literacy

As literacy rates go, Kerala ranks far above all other Indian states. And last week Kottayam (about 160 kilometres from Trivandrum), became the first town in the country to achieve 100 per cent literacy. On 2 October, this year, Ernakulam is also likely to become the only district in India to achieve total literacy among the 5-60 age group. By any standards this is a great achievement. But specially commendable in this case, for the literacy rate in Kerala otherwise stands at 72 per cent.

The literacy drive in India has always

Jawaharlal Nehru, who maintained: "The modern world moves on the wheels of the written word. If one does not know the word he will be crushed under the wheel." So, on 26 January, 1989, Rajan launched his Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) in Ernakulam district, to be implemented under the National Literacy Mission, which sanctioned Rs 80 lakhs for it.

But only a month after Rajan launched TLC, the Kottayam district collector Alphonse Kannanthanam also got in on the act. He started a similar programme called the Peoples Education and Litera-

the auspices of the National Service Scheme (NSS) of the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. The NSS volunteers conducted a house-to-house campaign in all the 32 wards of the Kottayam municipality. A survey done by them before the programme got underway had indicated that 50 per cent of the illiterates were not willing to learn.

Nearly 700 NSS volunteers, helped by activists of various other organisations, retired teachers, and others, joined the 100-day campaign which covered every illiterate (except the mentally ill) in the 6-60 age group. Said Arifa Beevi (45) a *paan* shop owner: "Today I can sign my own name and it is a pleasure to haltingly read the newspaper headlines." Another neo-literate Krishnan Kutty has, in fact, begun trying his hand at poetry.

The campaign was a success in Kottayam mainly because the town already had a literacy rate of 96 per cent. Also, 80 per cent of Kerala's publishers and publishing houses are based here, giving the town a "literary element" as well.

Meanwhile in Ernakulam district, Rajan, with whom it all began, is having problems teaching the illiterates in the district, the majority of whom are Muslim, and refuse to learn on religious grounds. Rajan has assured them that they would be free to learn the way they want and has even formed a District Muslim Literacy Committee for this purpose, but their suspicion persists.

Rajan cautions: "Unlike a small town like Kottayam, Ernakulam is a big district and we may not achieve 100 per cent literacy. But still I will be happy if we can get at least 96 per cent." And it has to be admitted that Rajan and his 20,000 instructors who are offering voluntary services, are attempting the near-impossible.

But Rajan's effort cannot but be lauded. As K. Chandrasekharan, the Kerala education minister, told SUNDAY: "All district collectors here should take up this 100 per cent literacy programme because it will work only in Kerala. By 8 September 1990, the World Literacy Day, we would like the entire state to be totally literate." And in Kerala, this dream may well come true.

Sridhar S. Pillay/Ernakulam and Kottayam



The literacy drive in progress in Ernakulam: attempting the near-impossible

been a bit of a non-starter. There have been numerous programmes taken up in the past, the Adult Education Programme, Rural Functional Literacy Programme, and many others. But they floundered in red tapism and a lack of motivated implementing agencies.

Faced with this depressing scenario, the Ernakulam district collector, K.R. Rajan, decided on a new approach to achieve mass literacy. The soft spoken Rajan says: "As a country we cannot achieve 100 per cent literacy for another 100 years. So I thought Ernakulam district which has literacy rate of 76.9 per cent could do the impossible, especially in the Nehru Centenary year." And this would also serve as a tribute to

cy Programme Kottayam (PELCK). Kannanthanam said: "There may be similarities with Rajan's programme, but Kottayam being a small town can implement 100 per cent literacy in 100 days more effectively than a big district can." While in Ernakulam district, illiterates numbered nearly two lakhs out of a population of 30 lakhs, Kottayam town had only 2,209 illiterates in a population of 68,823. Predictably, Kannanthanam stole the march over Rajan. While the latter is still desperately trying to achieve his targets before October 2, Kannanthanam has managed to bring about total literacy in Kottayam.

It was a highly persuasive campaign that Kannanthanam initiated, under

The Tibetan way

How would you like a doctor who could feel your pulse and reel off the symptoms of your illness? Well, that is exactly what the friendly Tibetan doctor does—he diagnoses an illness by the pulse-beat.

It was the Buddhist monks who first took the medical *tantras* to Tibet, and now, the Tibetans have decided to return the legacy and have chosen Calcutta to open a clinic for Tibetan medicines. The Dalai Lama is taking



keen interest in the clinic and has requested the staff not to compromise on quality. The pills are a blend of traditional Asian herbs and medicines. The more precious ones are kept wrapped in silk.

Youngest player

Mrinal Mondal is more than just a second standard student in a school in Delhi: he has the privilege of being the youngest player in an international tournament. Six-year-old Mrinal, who studies in Ludlow Castle, took part in the recently concluded *Times of India* International Table Tennis Tournament. Son of a Delhi University table tennis coach, Mrinal entered three events—the cadet boys,

sub-junior boys and junior boys. So what if he was knocked out in the first round of each section—it was his spirit which won him the hearts of the spectators.

Profound knowledge

Child prodigies never cease to be in the news these days. Another wonder tot who is making the headlines is six-year-old Mousumi Chakrabarty from Adra, Purulia, in West Bengal. She is fond of higher maths, speaks several languages—including Dutch and German—is a good typist, keeps up with current affairs, and is conversant with Newton's laws of motion. Little wonder then that this gifted girl should want to study in the higher grade—class 7 or 8. But this is causing problems for her parents. While acknowledging her intellectual capabilities, school authorities felt that she was too young to be admitted in the



Mousumi: brilliant

senior section. But Mousumi refused to study at the primary level, asserting that she didn't have to be taught addition or subtraction when she was already familiar with geometry and trigonometry. So finally, the authorities have consented and allowed her to sit for the Madhyamik examinations in 1991.

Heavy burden

A child educationist equating today's schools with Auschwitz? Unbelievable? It's

strange but true. Eighty year-old Kota Shivarama Karanth feels that it is time "parents sought redress in a court of law for converting schools into torture cells".

The Jnanpith Award winner feels that today's child is being treated as a "miniature scholar racing towards the 21st century" who has no time to play at home. He is deprived of childhood itself as he has to carry a backload of books and a headload of stuff which cannot, and do not, interest him.

Karanth is also critical of the way languages are taught at the primary level with reading coming before speech. He ends his diatribe with his characteristic wry



humour: "What is the difference between child labour factories and our modern schools, so far as the plight of children is concerned?"

A time to joke

Want to test your joking prowess? If you are confident and willing to make the audience laugh, here is an ideal opportunity. The Rotaractors of Bombay (Dist. 314) are inviting people to participate in the 'Master of Jokes '89' competition to be held at the CMP Homoeopathic College on 29 July at 6.30 pm.

The press release reads: "Beware all those who feel that they can make people laugh at the drop of a hat." The 'jokers' should be innovative and be able to catch everyone's ear while cracking the joke.

THIS INDIA

● **NAGPUR:** It was a jarring and disturbing spectacle for passers-by to see the Indian national flag flying upside down at the Sitabuldi Fort recently. The fort comes within the jurisdiction of 118 Infantry Battalion of the Territorial Army. Someone at the fort obviously did not take his job seriously, and the national flag was hoisted with the green stripe above and the saffron one below. The flag kept flying upside down for the better part of the day. It was only at around 1.45 pm that the blunder came to the notice of the officials, and the tricolour was brought down and rehoisted in its proper position—*The Hitavada* (Ajay Kumar Singh, Nagpur)

● **ALLAHABAD:** A three-year-old boy, Sandeep, was operated upon by Dr Ashok Agarwal in a Naini nursing home and no less than 560 worms were removed from his stomach. Sandeep is now reported to be in good health—*The Northern India Patrika* (Rajneesh Batra, Allahabad)

● **BHIMAVARAM:** When V.V. Chalapati Rao, commissioner-in-charge of the Bhimavaram municipality, made a surprise visit to municipal schools recently, he did not find teacherless classes or a low turnout of students. He could not even make the rounds and notice any academic or extra-curricular activity. To his dismay and shock, the schools were closed though it was a working day. Teachers were absent and even some headmasters could not be traced. They had all gone home, declaring a holiday—*The Hindu* (Ramesh Chander, Hyderabad)

PRIZE RS 100 FOR THE ENTRY GIVEN FIRST

SUNDAY WEEK

BEGINNING 23 JULY 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

Be confident and courageous in your dealings with those in authority. Persons of the opposite sex will be especially helpful to you this week. There is more good news you will receive a letter which you have been waiting for for a long time. Socially, this is going to be a very fruitful week since you can renew old acquaintances.

Good dates: 23, 24 and 29

Lucky numbers: 1, 2 and 5

Favourable direction: South and South-west



LEO (21 July—20 August)

This is going to be a very successful week for you. By dint of hard work, not only will you be able to overcome your earlier setbacks, but if you are diligent enough you might achieve outstanding success. There will be some significant changes on all fronts including your love-life. A word of caution: use tact in your dealings with elders.

Good dates: 26, 27 and 28

Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 8

Favourable direction: North-east



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

This is the week for you. Stellar portents favour excellent opportunities. So, utilise them to the utmost. Professional, social and even domestic activities will prove very satisfying to you. Those of you who have children should be careful with your expenses. Do not hesitate to ask for favours from those in authority.

Good dates: 24, 26 and 29

Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: North



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

This week promises to be excellent for you. So, go ahead with your plans. You can afford to take risks for you will lose nothing. Professionally, progress may be painfully slow but do not let that dishearten you. Differences with your colleagues or superiors should be settled immediately and peacefully.

Good dates: 24, 27 and 28

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: North and South



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

This, unfortunately, is not a good week for you. Businessmen are advised not to enter into new contracts. Those in service should avoid entering into disputes with their superiors. The stars do not favour any kind of romance. Your health may cause some problems.

Good dates: 25, 27 and 28

Lucky numbers: 3, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: West



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

An excellent week for most of you. A very favourable time for romance. Opportunities will come your way, so make the best use of them. However, a word of caution: do not take anything for granted. The early part of the week will bring in a lot of money and you can pay off your pending debts.

Good dates: 25, 26 and 27

Lucky numbers: 3, 7 and 8

Favourable direction: East



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

A good week for businessmen who may enter into new contracts. The time is also favourable for making new friendships too. However, a word of caution: elders will prove to be very annoying, so keep your temper under control. Try to avoid entering into controversies. Your health may give you some cause for anxiety.

Good dates: 25, 27 and 29

Lucky numbers: 3, 4 and 6

Favourable direction: North



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

This will be a moderately pleasant week. You are likely to gain some property but do not get carried away by your fortunes. Try to curb extravagant tendencies. A secret association or friendship may prove to be particularly beneficial. This is the time to seek and act upon the advice of elders. A good week for romance: capitalise on it.

Good dates: 23, 25 and 27

Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: South-east



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

Good fortune awaits you this week. You will find yourself in a position to pay back your debts.

A big opportunity will come your way this week, so don't waste it. For those who have lawsuits pending, this is the best period to settle them. Friends will go out of their way to help you, especially in matters regarding your profession.

Good dates: 23, 24 and 25

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: East



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

A moderately good week. Those in service will win the praise of their superiors and those in authority. The financial front looks bright. You can go on a shopping spree and buy certain luxuries. But be careful, your gains may induce you to be extravagant. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 24, 28 and 29

Lucky numbers: 1, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: East and North-west



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

A favourable week lies ahead of you. Friends and relatives will make this a busy week for you and add to your share of happiness. The financial front may not be very bright; chances of making any gains are low. But do not lose heart. A letter will bring you good news.

Good dates: 24, 26 and 28

Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 6

Favourable direction: South and West



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

An excellent week for you. The time is favourable for romance if you are not already in love. Your problems will be solved very soon. Try not to take unnecessary risks. For those in service, dramatic changes are forecast. However, financial problems will continue to bother you for some more time.

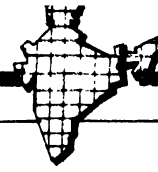
Good dates: 23, 26 and 27

Lucky numbers: 2, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: West

Star Partners: Virgo—Gemini

The Gemini man is an impulsive man, and may make unnecessary demands on the Virgo woman. Being quiet and sober, she may tolerate his whims and fancies, but not for long. They may ultimately part ways.



Wanted: a good press

Amarsinh Chaudhary has managed to cling on to his *gaddi* by his toenails. Nonetheless, the Gujarat chief minister continues to be haunted by feelings of insecurity. Why else would he suddenly decide to go on a self-publicity binge?

Not only have advertisements extolling the CM's virtues been placed in as many as 450 publications all over the country, a 23-minute documentary has also been made to publicise his 'achievements'.

As if this wasn't enough, reports have it that the chief minister is trying his level best to convince 'friendly' journalists to give him a good press.

Booked?

The Deve Gowda camp in Karnataka has found a fresh stick to beat Ramakrishna Hegde with.

The former chief minister is now being accused of squandering valuable funds on publishing innumerable glossies on such varied subjects as centre-state relations, Panchayati Raj, etc., under the auspices of the

Deve Gowda: at it again



Amarsinh Chaudhary: self-promotion binge

state information department. The publications, brought out for the express purpose of disseminating valuable information among the general public, were all authored by ghost writers, though Hegde hogged the byline. The total expenditure incurred on this self-promotion came to about Rs 35 crores, by Deve Gowda's estimates.

Hegde loyalist and former information minister M.P. Prakash was quick to the defence. Hegde, he insisted, had written the books himself, and the costs did not amount to Rs 35 crores—stopping at Rs 34 crores, instead. Hegde, he went on to add, did not need to go in for image-building exercises

Ramakrishna Hegde: literary man



such as these, being exceedingly popular, anyway. And if there was any substance to these charges, why had Deve Gowda kept so quiet about them, while in government?

The Deve Gowda camp had its riposte ready. Said S.V. Datta: "If Hegde did write all the books then it explains the slack administration during his tenure as chief minister."

He who rides the tiger

Karunanidhi may well have to change his political stance after the assassination of the two TULF leaders, A. Amirthalingam and V. Yogeswaran, allegedly by the LTTE. The DMK chief had with great effort weaned away the Tamil Tigers from their benefactor, M.G. Ramachandran, and taken on the role of their guardian angel after assuming office.

But recent events have forced Karunanidhi to water down his support for the Tigers considerably. He has withdrawn his earlier demand for an IPKF withdrawal, now recommending that the problem be sorted out through bilateral talks.

After the brutal assassinations, though, Karunanidhi will have, of necessity, to withdraw support to the LTTE. After all, he can hardly root for those who are said to be responsible for the murder of two leaders, who were thought highly of by Tamils this side of the Palk Straits.

Full house

Some days back, it was full house at Haryana Bhavan. Only to be expected, said observers. After all, Devi Lal was in the capital and all Janata Dal members had of necessity to drop by to pay their respects. But what caused com-



Devi Lal: telling him off

ment was the complexion of the gathering that assembled to greet the Jat messiah.

All of them, apparently, were teachers from various government schools in Haryana. But why should educationists suddenly see fit to put in an appearance at Lal's *darbar*, even if he is the chief minister of Haryana? Evidently, these unfortunates had been served transfer orders by the state government and had come to Lal's court to seek justice.

All of them armed, appropriately enough, with *sifarishs* (recommendations) from their local MLAs. ■

Where's the beef?

Why do Indian diplomats abroad always make common cause with the Russians? Could it be because they feel at home with the only foreign office that makes more mistakes than them?

Consider the latest Russian *faux pas*. The Russian ambassador to India told the ministry of external affairs (MEA) that he would throw a party to welcome Alfred Gonsalves, our ambassador to Moscow. The MEA was delighted, but appalled when it discovered that the tactless Russians had clubbed the Gonsalves welcome with a farewell for the outgoing Swedish ambassador.

Worse still, there was only one meat course. It was— you guessed it!— beef.

Doublespeak

Perhaps there's no easier way of getting out of a sticky situation than by blaming all mix-ups on those stu-



L.K. Advani: buying his story
pid reporters who will get everything wrong.

V.P. Singh is getting to be past master at this one. At a press conference in Jaipur, when the Janata Dal leader was obviously in his best holier-than-thou mood, the Raja declared grandly that he would rather remain in the



V.P. Singh: convenient scapegoat

Opposition forever, than come to power riding on the BJP's coat tails. Pleased no end by the *wah wahs* that followed, Singh made his way to Delhi.

To come up against a furious Devi Lal, who informed him testily, that without the support of the BJP, he wouldn't even find a place in the Opposition ranks after the next polls.

Suitably chastened the Raja backed down. Going so far as to apologise to BJP president L.K. Advani for the misunderstanding created, all the while stridently protesting misreporting.

It's served the purpose, though. Advani, taken in by all that self-righteous nonsense, called him over for dinner the next day.

Age cannot wither them

Age cannot wither them, nor custom stale their infinite variety. Yes, we are talking of the youth leaders of our young republic.

Have you ever noticed how this species never seems to age? At first, one thought that it was only those in the Congress(I) who enjoyed the grant of eternal youth, but the Opposition

seems to have a fair share of them, too.

The case of Mohan Prakash is illustrative. He was elected the president of the Yuva Janata in 1977. Fair enough. But a good 12 years later, Prakash continues to be a youth leader, officiating as president of the Yuva Janata Dal these days.

So what if he is well into his forties?

Sam Pitroda: getting them in order



Chairman Sam

No sooner had Sam Pitroda become chairman of the Telecom Commission, when he decided to get Sanchar Bhavan in order. The work culture of those under him had to change, decided the technology whiz kid. Working towards that, Pitroda decreed that the 31 categories of designations and pay scales that were currently in force in the department would be whittled down to six.

The announcement was duly made at a meeting at Sanchar Bhavan and predictably met with a cold response. All present informed the comeback man that it was foolhardy to attempt such sweeping changes when he had barely found his bearings in his new assignment.

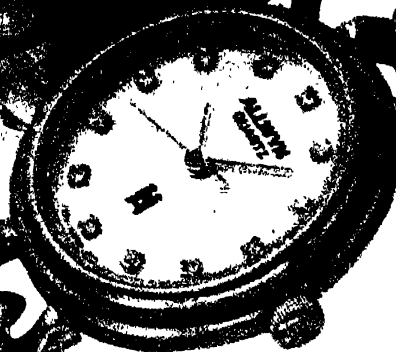
Pitroda, nevertheless, is set on his plan. And Sanchar Bhavan seems destined for some interesting times ahead.

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BOFORS: NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT AN OLD DEAL

BOFORS

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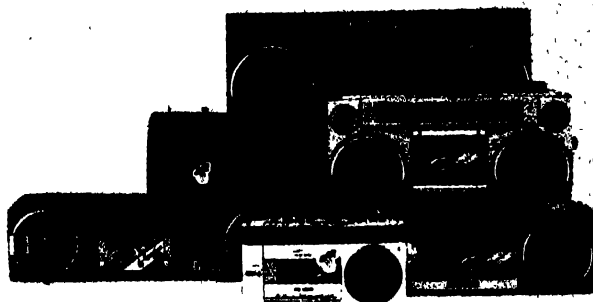
PAWAR'S PLOTS

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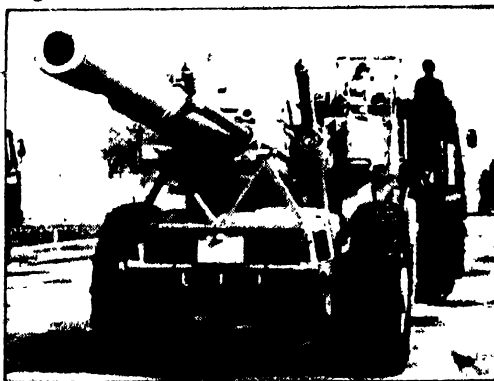
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The reunion of Jayalalitha and Veerappan makes the AIADMK a force to reckon with in Tamil Nadu politics.



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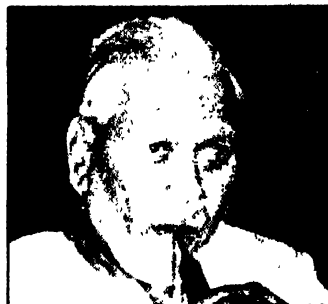
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In Bihar, the murder of a Congress(I) MLA sparks off uproarious scenes in the state Assembly; Congress(I) dissidents in Gujarat train their guns on chief minister Amarsinh Chaudhary and M.L. Fotedar.

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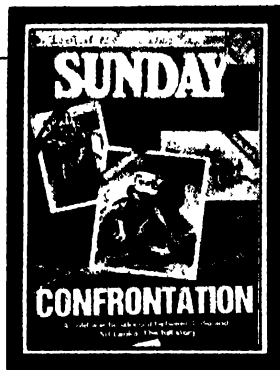
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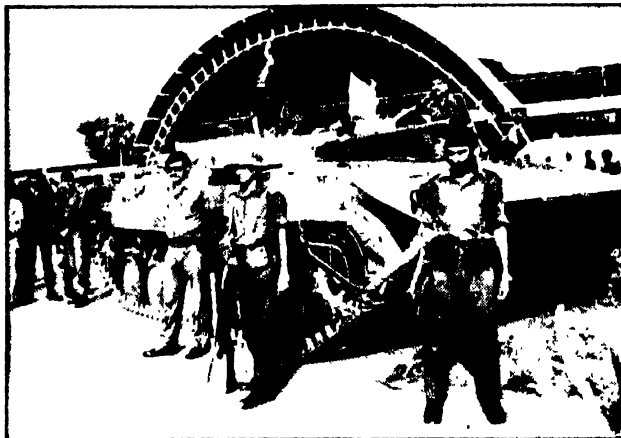
The Lanka imbroglio

It was a good assessment of relations between New Delhi and Colombo (*Confrontation*, 9—15 July). President Premadasa's political gambit has far exceeded the exigencies of the situation. While Rajiv Gandhi has been pragmatic and sensible, the same cannot be said of his counterpart in Colombo. Premadasa's *bon homie* with the LTTE may not ultimately turn the scale of events in his favour. The Sri Lankan President's stand, that the IPKF would not have any authority in his land after 29 July, may actually spell danger for the thousands of Tamils in the island. For, after the withdrawal of the IPKF, the Tamil population will be at the mercy of the LTTE. The need of the hour is negotiations between the leaders of the two countries. New Delhi and Colombo should proceed diplomatically and cautiously instead of precipitating the present crisis.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

■ It is difficult to understand why India is involving itself in a cold war with Sri Lanka. If President Premadasa wants to tackle the LTTE without the help of the IPKF, it is his problem. After all, he is the head of a democratically elected government and is entitled to take decisions without India interfering at every step. The ethnic problem of the Tamils is purely an internal affair of Sri Lanka and India would do well to stay out of it.

Nanda Chandra Chowdhury, Kharagpur (West Bengal)



The IPKF in Sri Lanka: aid thy neighbour

■ The IPKF has played a valiant role in Sri Lanka. President Premadasa ought to feel grateful to India for sending troops to fight the LTTE. Instead of appreciating India's efforts and the sacrifices of the IPKF soldiers, it is indeed shocking to find the Sri Lankan President unfairly accusing India of interfering in the affairs of the island. If Premadasa wants the withdrawal of Indian troops, he must honour the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. India cannot afford to call back the IPKF without an assurance that the lives of the Tamils in the island will be safe.

Yogeshwar Davar, New Delhi

Check this evil

The extract from Ranjana Kumari's book was a horrifying reminder of the evil in our society (*Dowry deaths: The human face of the tragedy*, 2—8 July). The torture perpetrated on Jamuni sent shivers down my spine. It is quite clear that education and an affluent background do not change the mentality of the groom's family. The more educated the groom is, the more dowry his parents demand from the bride's family.

The problem must be curbed with an iron hand. The guilty must be punished. The extract shows how a cross-section of society is under the influence of this

evil trend. A detailed study must be conducted to evolve ways to check this social evil. Brides definitely are not for burning!

Shahzad Hussain, New Delhi

■ In a country where a woman is considered the weaker sex and looked down upon, dowry has only added to her sad plight. This social evil has reduced the sacred institution of marriage to a mere business transaction. Because of the absence of a clear-cut programme of eradication, the evil has assumed monstrous proportions in recent times. Dowry must be expelled from our society. Those who demand dowry must be severely punished.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

A success story

The success of Gita Mehta's novel (*A novel success*, 2—8 July) is an indication of the fact that India as a subject has always enthralled Western readers. In her book, Mehta has brilliantly portrayed the grandeur of the era of princes and emperors. The most remarkable aspect in the novel is the role of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the National Movement. The success of *Raj* will undoubtedly place Gita Mehta among the top-ranking Indo-Anglian writers of the century.

Harekrishna Mahanta, New Delhi

A third face

There is a third Shahabuddin too (*The two Shahabuddins*, 9—15 July). He is the cunning politician who is quick to disown responsibility and still quicker to appropriate the achievements of others. When matters became too serious over the call for a boycott of the Republic Day celebrations, Shahabuddin chickened out, then interpreted, re-interpreted and clarified the boycott call. He even turned round to say that it was not his idea but a collective decision. And when the country applauded him for calling for a ban of *The Satanic Verses*, Shahabuddin exulted in the glory, without caring to admit that the credit was due to G.M. Banatwalla who was the first to ask for a ban on the book. Such is the wily leader!

Abdul Wadood, Bombay (Maharashtra)



Shahabuddin: taking liberties

■ Shahabuddin is a trickster who has always tried to look smarter than he actually is. He does not seem to mind the fact that he is called a communalist. This politician exploits Muslim sentiments through his anti-Hindu and Muslim chauvinistic rhetoric. Given his political record, it would not be wrong to say that his entire political philosophy revolves round rabid communalism. Shahabuddin has been largely responsible for the worsening of the Babri Masjid-

Ramjanmabhoomi controversy. His one and only notable contribution to Indian politics is that of holding the nation's communal harmony to ransom by attempting to dishonour Republic Day.

Anil Kumar Dwivedi, New Delhi

■ He has always been a controversial figure in Indian politics. To some he is a political manipulator and to others a well-wisher of the minorities and the weaker sections of society. Some have even called him the 'second Jinnah'. However, his career as a diplomat was a highly commendable one.

T. Mahamood, Peringathur (Kerala)

Unsafe roads

It was an exhaustive survey on the increasing number of road accidents in India (*The way to dusty death*, 18—24 June). You have rightly pointed out that the strength of the Maruti's body



Death on the road

is not in keeping with its powerful engine. According to a survey, almost 82 per cent of the cars involved in accidents are Marutis. The Maruti is the most dangerous vehicle on the road today. Its speed is its undoing.

A. Srinivasa Murthy, Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)

■ It was distressing to know that the number of fatal accidents has risen so steeply over the last decade. It is the drivers who are to blame because on most occasions

Trivialising wife-beating

Kushwant Singh's notion of humour has us appalled (*Gossip sweet and sour: A Wife's Wrath*, 4—10 June). We fail to understand how wife-beating can ever be considered a joke. We are members of Saheli, an organisation which deals with inci-

dents of violence by husbands. In extreme cases, the wife is severely injured and requires medical attention. We strongly protest against such attempts to trivialise violence on women.

Ranjana, Rajni, Sujata and Vrinda, New Delhi

they drive in an inebriated state. The other reason for the increasing casualties is the deplorable condition of Indian roads. What has made matters worse is that road repairing is often entrusted to contractors who are concerned with pocketing money by cutting corners.

A.N. Veeraraghavan, Bombay (Maharashtra)

while masquerading as secularists. Personally speaking, I would rather prefer a Hindu Rashtra.

Amrit K. Roy, Chalbasa (Bihar)

Will peace return?



A polling booth in CHT: looking ahead

It is India's hope that the recently concluded elections to the three autonomous hill councils in Bangladesh will bring peace to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (*Ballot*

versus bullet, 9—15 July). If the history of Partition is recounted, it will be noted that the Chittagong Hill Tracts, with a Buddhist majority, was to have remained with India. A serious error in the delineation of the boundary between India and Pakistan found the area in Pakistan. Can't India get back the area under international laws?

Bangladesh's assurance that the Chakma refugees will be taken back is not bearing fruit. These refugees are a huge drain on India's resources. The allegation that RAW was training the Chakma guerillas in the use of sophisticated weaponry is preposterous, to say the least. India's interest lies in the return of the refugees to

A lesser evil

There is no doubt that the BJP's intransigence could ruin the Opposition's chances in the forthcoming elections (*The seats of power*, 2—8 July). However, the BJP leaders can hardly be blamed for their attitude. For instance, they are right in saying that even without seat adjustments with the Janata Dal, they would manage to get a sizable presence in the Lok Sabha. The Janata Dal consists of power-hungry politicians who are exploiting the issue of communalism

Bangladesh and the return of peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

A.B. Roy, Hooghly (West Bengal)

Ban the drink

I congratulate you for bringing to light the unfortunate truth about carcinogenic soft drinks (*Beware of the bottle*, 9—15 July). It was amazing to learn that the government allows soft drink manufacturers to use BVO as an ingredient despite the fact that it has been banned in 129 countries. Perhaps the government is afraid of losing a considerable amount of revenue as well as political support.

Panna Lal Mundhra, Calcutta (West Bengal)

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Changing faiths



Why do people react so violently to conversions?

KHUSHWANT SINGH

A singularly gruesome case of a Muslim father's reaction to his daughter converting to Christianity occurred in England recently. Abdul Malik (56), a Bangladeshi factory worker settled in Birmingham for over 30 years, is a devout Muslim who says his prayers in the local mosque three times every day. His 16-year-old daughter, Pharbim, fell in love with a young English boy who belonged to a Christian sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses. She began to attend their meetings and announced her intention of converting to Christianity. They were understandably upset. Pharbim left home and became a Jehovah's Witness. She thought she could bring her family round to accepting her and returned home to talk it out with her father. Abdul Malik was so incensed that he knocked his daughter to the ground and in front of his wife and other children ordered Pharbim to recite the *Kalima*. When she refused to do so, he slit her throat with a bread knife just as he would have that of a goat on Id-ul-Zoha. "She would not listen. She had to be taught a lesson," said Abdul Malik when arraigned for murder. He has been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Some years ago there was an equally gruesome case again in England of a Sikh school teacher whose daughter wanted to marry a Pakistani Muslim. The father cut off his daughter's head with a *kirpan*.

WHY DO some people react so violently to conversions? It is usually the very devout who prove to be the most intolerant. Their reactions have very little to do with religion and much more with a loss of face in their own community. I know of innumerable cases where parents, whose daughters have married outside their religion, refuse to see their faces again. They make their daughters unhappy and are themselves miserable for the rest of their

lives. On the other hand, parents, who gracefully welcome men their daughters have chosen to marry, are rarely unhappy with their sons-in-law. I know of three such cases personally. Two are of Sikh girls who came from very orthodox Sikh families and married Muslims. One father refuses to see his daughter though she has been married for over 20 years, and has children of her own. Virtually her only contact with her parents is through me. The other family asked me for advice when their daughter asked for permission to marry a Bohra. I told them not to stand in her way. Their Muslim son-in-law is now closer to them than their own son. The third is of a Hindu girl. Her parents came to see me and asked me to dissuade her from marrying a Muslim because they would find it difficult to get Hindu husbands for their other daughters. I refused to be swayed by their argument. The girl married her Muslim boyfriend. Far from drifting apart, the two families have come closer to each other.

INTER-RELIGIOUS marriages are by no means a one-way traffic. I know of quite as many Hindus and Sikhs who are happily married to Muslim women. What I find objectionable is some people's insistence that the boy or girl should be converted to the faith of the would-be husband. Unfortunately, Muslims insist on conversion more than Hindus or Sikhs. This is unnecessary humiliation for a new entrant to the family and should never be agreed to. We have a perfectly good Special Marriages Act devoid of religious claptrap whereby parties can adhere to their faiths if they want to and yet live in inter-communal matrimonial harmony. Their offspring are free to choose whatever religion they want to. Or reject all of them.

Conversion to another faith creates more problems than it solves. Sections of our Harijan brethren tried to escape humiliating social discrimination practised against them by upper caste Hindus by converting to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Sikhism. It didn't make the slightest difference to their social standing in society. What is worse is that the religions they converted to have become contaminated with caste considerations. Indian Christians and Muslims have upper and lower caste converts; Sikhism, despite its claim to be a casteless fraternity, has never succeeded in giving the Mazhabis equal status. And neo-Buddhists, by whatever name they call themselves, remain Dalits.

Has anyone any new ideas on how we can eradicate caste consciousness from the Indian psyche?

Inter-religious marriages are by no means a one-way traffic. I know of several Hindus and Sikhs who are happily married to Muslim women

PICK-POCKET DIVORCE

A man took a clipping of a newspaper and read it out to his friend: "You know what this says? It says that a man divorced his wife because she was in the habit of going through his pockets."

"What are you going to do with the clipping?"

"I'll put it in my pocket."

(Contributed by Bano, New Delhi) ■



R K LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA

After publication of this report, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has been deprived of the fig-leaf he has been trying to cover himself with.

JAIPAL REDDY, Janata Dal secretary, on the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report on Bofors

Agar sarkar circus ki tarah kaam karegi, to virodhi paksh ke drama par appatti nahi karne chahiye. (If the government behaves like a circus, it should not object to the Opposition's drama.)

A.B. VAJPAYEE, BJP leader, in Parliament

Can a minority (Opposition) ask the Prime Minister to resign?

N.K.P. SALVE, Congress(I) MP, in the Rajya Sabha on the Opposition's reaction to the CAG report

It will be an insult to the Indian if someone says that votes can be bought by spending money.

RAJIV GANDHI, Prime Minister

They (the Pakistan Opposition) cannot digest the fact that what they could not accomplish in ten years, we have done in six months.

BENAZIR BHUTTO, Pakistan Prime Minister, on ties with India

The party will be going to the polls without any clear-cut economic, social, political and foreign policy. We don't have any convincing solution to offer.

HARIKESH BAHADUR, Janata Dal MP

This is an effort to malign me and Arun Nehru. Why, I don't know. If I wanted to host someone, it is my right to do so... There would be no need for me to hide it.

RANJIT CHANA, a real estate developer in Los Angeles, denying that he had hosted Arun Nehru during his US visit

I don't want to talk about Bansi Lal. Let him hold his rallies. How does it matter?

BHAJAN LAL, Union minister for agriculture, on his arch-rival

But I do mind when the Indian Airlines receive a plane with a coconut and a puja... We are objecting to the state being identified with a particular community.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN, Muslim leader and Janata Dal MP

It is our considered opinion that the moment there is a man in the office, women start vying for his attention. It happens in homes even.

MADHU KISHWAR, editor of Manushi, on why there were no men working with her

Unfair. She has the advantage of time and experience.

MADHURI DIXIT, actress, on the media comparing her to Sridevi

I shall be the number one very soon. Not as a villain nor as a hero but as an actor.

SHAKTI KAPOOR, film star

BACK TO BOFORS

In a sense, there are only two really significant issues concerning the Bofors gun deal. Whether the Swedish arms manufacturer secured the contract illegally—that is, through the payment of commissions or bribes. And whether the gun India finally plumped for (the FH 77B) was the best available at the time.

The press, the Opposition and the public chose to focus largely on the first issue. On whether, for example, the Hinduja were middlemen for the deal. Or, if members of Rajiv Gandhi's government were paid off. New Delhi, in contrast, has made out that it is the second issue which is all-important. Since the scandal broke in April 1987, it has said time and again that the gun is a good one; arranged field demonstrations for the press to show off its firing capability; and set up the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), which after 50 sittings and eight months of half-hearted investigation concluded, among other things, that "a superior gun system has been purchased from M/s Bofors" and that the contract "proved to be highly advantageous to the country".

The two issues are of course related. For if there were better guns available, then it stands to reason that the procedure for selecting the Bofors howitzer over the others was flawed and improperly carried out. This, in turn, would suggest that bribes/commissions may well have been paid to secure the contract in favour of Bofors.

This is perhaps why the government tried so hard to establish that the FH 77B was chosen over its rivals only after intense scrutiny. The JPC, for instance, spent about half its report attempting to prove that the selection process was stringent and proper.

But was it? The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), T.N. Chaturvedi, on the Bofors purchase appears to destroy that line of the government's defence. Tabled in Parliament last week, the report seriously questions the contention of the government and the JPC that the Bofors gun was the best available at the price. Chaturvedi's 20-page audit indicts the government on many counts. It describes the basis on which the prices of the various competing gun systems were calculated as "flawed"; expresses reservations over the manner in which the technical evaluations to select the Bofors howitzer were conducted; and alleges that the Swedish arms manufacturer failed to observe certain conditions of the contract.

The Comptroller and Auditor General's report not only confirms that kickbacks were involved, but also questions the manner in which the howitzer deal was pushed through

The Bofors gun: booming again

The report provided the Opposition the perfect opportunity to rake up the Bofors scandal once again. There was chaos in both Houses of Parliament the day after the report was tabled (18 July). In the Lok Sabha, MPs almost came to blows over Rajiv Gandhi being called a "chor". The Opposition raised slogans like "CAG report kahta hai ki Rajiv Gandhi chor hai" and demanded that the Prime Minister resign at once. On the following day, Opposition MPs stalled the proceedings of both Houses once again, forcing the Lok Sabha to adjourn eight times and the Rajya Sabha five times. The Opposition was just as spirited the day after and once again demanded Rajiv Gandhi's resignation. Lok Sabha Opposition MPs insisted that the Prime Minister should be present to answer questions related to the CAG report. Said the Janata Dal's Madhu Dandavate, "The Prime Minister is in the dock. We want him here." Later, almost the entire Opposition boycotted the discussion held on the report, saying that it did not want to be associated with the denigration of the CAG.

As for the government, it was preparing its defence even as the report was tabled. Congress members of the JPC

RAVI BATHIA

Kolandaivelu's appointment was widely viewed as a deliberate act to contain the damage that the CAG report was expected to cause. Understandably, the last thing that the Rajiv Gandhi government wanted was to be also indicted by the PAC on Bofors, especially with the general election only a few months



away. New Delhi knew the CAG report would be unfavourable. The government has known Chaturvedi as a forthright man who is not afraid of speaking his mind. As Union home secretary, he was extremely critical of the manner in which the problems in Punjab and Assam were being handled. It is said that Chaturvedi was promoted to the office of the CAG in order to keep him away from more politically sensitive posts like Cabinet secretary.

Chaturvedi's report begins by remarking that the defence ministry made all the files relevant to his audit available to him only after July 1988, although he had called for them as early as July 1986. The observation sets the tone for the rest of the report, in which he is unafraid to criticise the government



New Delhi knew the CAG report would be unfavourable. The government has known T.N. Chaturvedi as a forthright man who is not afraid of speaking his mind

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- Technical evaluations of the various guns and their ammunitions were not properly conducted.
- The army suddenly (and by implication curiously) decided to opt for the Bofors gun in early 1986, despite it having chosen the French gun (the Sofma TR-155) as the first preference on six separate occasions between 1982 and 1985.
- The procedure used to estimate the prices of the competing gun systems was flawed. And the government's claim that the Bofors howitzer was cheaper than the Sofma is untenable.
- Ammunition worth over Rs 300 crores was ordered after the "minimum acceptable parameters" specified by the army were diluted.
- The defence ministry failed to get a

categorical assurance from Bofors with respect to the use of middlemen. The contract signed with Bofors did not specify that agents should not be employed. And had this omission not been made, the country could have recovered over Rs 60 crores—the money paid by Bofors to its agents.

- Bofors slipped in the delivery schedule; and the defence ministry relaxed the schedule after the contract was signed.

- The decision to undertake indigenous manufacture of the Bofors gun and ammunition was taken by the defence ministry without a comprehensive assessment of the financial and economic implications.

It is the section that relates to the technical evaluations of the guns that will embarrass the government most. Although it contains no information that is new (the data in the CAG findings are no different than those in the JPC report, it is just that the conclusions are different), Chaturvedi's report raises a number of uncomfortable questions. For instance, he wonders why army headquarters suddenly decided to opt for the Bofors howitzer in February 1986, when it had all along favoured Sofma. The army's explanation, as Chaturvedi notes, was that the Bofors gun had a better "burst fire capability", which is



The ruling party has charged that Chaturvedi exceeded his brief, which was to audit the purchase. Asks N.K.P. Salve: "Is he an accountant or an army chief?"

vital to the employment of "shoot and scoot" tactics. And that the ability to shoot and scoot, which was not so important earlier (when the army opted for Sofma), had become crucial, given that the enemy (read Pakistan) had acquired a certain kind of radar that enhanced the accuracy of its weaponry. (K. Sundarji, who was army chief when he recommended the Bofors gun in February 1986, told the JPC that this was the main reason for the change in



HOW THE GUN WAS CHOSEN

Does the procedure by which the Bofors howitzer was selected over its competitors give cause for suspicion? The Opposition thinks so and the CAG report suggests that it was improper. Here is how Bofors won out.

1975: An expert committee of the army suggests that it needs guns of 155 mm calibre.

1979: A 'philosophy paper' prepared by army headquarters, which suggests modernisation measures over the next 20 years, makes the same suggestion.

August 1980: The government approves the paper as the basis for future planning and production.

1982: After trials evaluating six gun systems, army headquarters shortlist four. They are the British FH 70, the Austrian N-45, the French TR-155 (Sofma) and the Bofors FH 77B from Sweden.

December 1982: On the defence ministry's instruction, the army final-

ises its General Staff Evaluation Report. It recommends the French Sofma as its first choice. Bofors comes second.

May 1984: A negotiating committee with the defence secretary as chairman is set up. It invites quotations from the manufacturers of the four short-listed gun systems.

August 1984: Army headquarters forward a comparative assessment of the gun systems to the ministry. This indicates that the Sofma gun is

(From left) The Austrian N-45, the British FH-70 and the French TR-155: Bofors' competitors



preference.)

Chaturvedi then goes on to attempt to refute the validity of the army's explanation. He argues that army headquarters was well aware of the enhanced capability the radar gave the enemy in September 1985, when it judged Sofma the best gun. He also points out that a "well-known journal on defence matters" had stated that the moratorium on the sale of these radars was lifted as early as 1983. Writes Chaturvedi: "Against this background, it is not clear why the essential features of shoot and scoot tactics, equally relevant and known to defence circles in 1984-85...assumed significance only in February 1986."

It is this kind of remark that has led the ruling party to charge that Chaturvedi has exceeded his brief, which was to audit the purchase. Asks N.K.P. Salve, Congress MP and chairman of the Ninth Finance Commission, "Is he an accountant or an army chief?" While it would be absurd to accept the Congress' contention that the report is perverse and tendentious, there is truth in the claim that the CAG has made evaluative comments on matters that go well beyond the financial aspects of the contract.

In any case, the report deserves to be taken seriously, coming as it does from a constitutional authority with the status



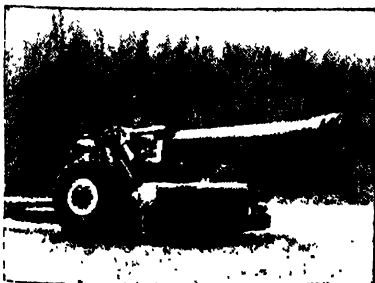
Members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee: whitewashed the deal

the best, since it meets 18 of the 25 "minimum acceptable parameters" as opposed to Bofors' 11. The army indicates that the British and the Austrian guns are not acceptable.

November 1984-October 1985: Further army evaluations also indicate that Sofma is the best choice.

November 1985: The negotiating committee accepts the army's recommendation that only the French and Swedish firms be called for talks.

November 1985-February 1986: The negotiating committee



continues its discussions with the two manufacturers. Both of them slash prices to bag the contract.

January 1986: A note submitted to Rajiv by his office states that both the gun systems are technically acceptable and that price and credit terms will be crucial to arrive at the final decision.

17 February, 1986: Army headquarters submit another technical evaluation, which they describe as "final". New "characteristics" are taken into account in this evaluation and Bofors comes out on top. K. Sundarji, who was army chief then, later argued that the switch in preference had to do with the changed military circumstances.

12 March, 1986: The negotiating committee recommends, after taking into account the technical, contractual and financial aspects, that a letter of intent be issued to Bofors.

24 March, 1986: The contract for supplying the guns and ammunition is signed with Bofors.

of the CAG. While the Opposition may find no information in the report which suggests that the government was aware that commissions had been paid to secure the contract, there is enough to demonstrate that the Bofors howitzer was selected over the others on questionable grounds.

Has the CAG report given the Opposition enough ammunition to make Bofors an election issue? The Opposition believes it has. Says BJP president L.K. Advani, "We already had enough with all that *The Hindu* and the *Indian Express* have been publishing. Now one of their own representatives has given us a weapon for victory." Adds the Congress(S)' K.P. Unnikrishnan, "All that needs to be done is to connect the CAG's findings with those already published. Nothing will be left unanswered."

While it is somewhat far-fetched to believe that the CAG report can be used for sizeable electoral gain, there is little doubt that it has embarrassed Rajiv Gandhi and his government. Every time the Bofors scandal seems to have been buried and forgotten, it suddenly surfaces once again. This is a thought that will be on Rajiv's mind as the election approaches.

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi

PAWAR'S PLOTS

A barrage of corruption allegations—from involvement in the country's biggest land scam to privatisation deals—is directed at Maharashtra's chief minister. But Sharad Pawar remains curiously unperturbed



Sharad Pawar (left): strategic silence; (above) Nariman Point: compounding congestion

In this country, political office means not owing anyone any explanations. And nobody perhaps knows this better than Sharad Pawar, the indomitable Congress(I) chief minister of Maharashtra, who is currently at the centre of a corruption scandal which, in terms of sheer financial magnitude, could well put Bofors to shame. Pawar is accused of having misused his office to help realtors, business friends and political cronies reap multi-crore rupee fortunes. According to conservative estimates, the kickbacks in-

volved would alone amount to at least Rs 200 crores (as against the Rs 64 crore figure touted in the Bofors case). Indignant citizens' groups, enraged environmentalists, the Bombay media, a section of the state Congress(I) and opposition parties are clamouring for an explanation from Pawar. But the chief minister remains inscrutable, secure in the knowledge that the right to remain silent is

uproar in the Maharashtra Assembly on 21 July this year over the corruption charges too has left him unfazed and in no mood to heed his critics. Yet, the case against him is anything but frivolous. And the list of charges is disconcertingly long:

- Foremost is the so-called 'dereservation' scandal. Pawar allegedly released as many as 577 plots in the greater

secretive about details, has not openly advertised for offers and has surreptitiously negotiated with a few handpicked businessmen. The state government disclosed a few details on the privatisation of roads and highways only recently (on 19 July this year) and that too only when the issue threatened to billow into yet another major controversy.

- Bombay's political grapevine is abuzz with reports on how Pawar has fixed potential troublemakers: key journalists, senior bureaucrats and several politicians, including a few Opposition members. Several IAS officers have been allocated land in Malabar Hills through a questionable government directive; several flats have been gifted to key public personalities; and Pawar's political cronies have received major favours by bending government norms.

- Last, but not the least, Pawar is reported to have stashed away most of the cash generated from kickbacks in his personal accounts for the purpose of building up an independent political constituency in Maharashtra. Most state Congress(I) leaders aver that Pawar has given only a small fraction of the kickbacks money to the party's central election fund and to a few central Congress(I) leaders. This, they believe, has nevertheless rendered his position unassailable in Maharashtra.

Whether true or not, the gravity of the charges alone would normally have provoked a reply from even the most taciturn of politicians. But Pawar has not batted an eyelid. In the meantime, the accusations continue to gain substance and the evidence increasingly points to a real conflagration beneath the smoke of conjecture.

Sharad Pawar's aura of invulnerability stems from a single factor: his importance in the Congress(I)'s scheme of things. With general elections only a few months away, the party high command is in no mood to destabilise any of its important state leaders. In Maharashtra, with its 48 Lok Sabha seats, Pawar is considered the best equipped to lead the party to success. And he knows it. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi himself has made it amply clear that Pawar remains the party's trusted lieutenant. "There are only two leaders in Maharashtra," Rajiv recently declared, "Sharad Pawar and Pratibha Patil (the state PCC-I chief)." He also brushed aside the suggestion that Pawar was being asked to quit.

In fairness to Pawar, his circumstances are not entirely fortuitous. He has worked diligently to get where he is. As an Opposition leader (Congress-S), Pawar had created the impression that



often the most powerful defence.

A lesser chief minister faced with a similar crisis might have cracked, but not Pawar. He is a survivor. And a hardened one at that. He has combated bad fortune, endured hard times as an Opposition leader, and has always succeeded in climbing back into the limelight. Not surprising then that he has not buckled under the barrage of accusations that make him out to be the most corrupt chief minister after the infamous A.R. Antulay, who was hounded out of office in a blaze of dubious publicity. The

Bombay area, all of which had been reserved for public purposes. The plots were released by direct government orders, in flagrant violation of developmental laws and in utmost secrecy. A handful of powerful Bombay realtors are reported to be behind this and stand to gain several hundred crores of rupees.

- Next is the hush-hush 'privatisation' move. Pawar has decided to hand over roads, public utilities and major civic facilities to private entrepreneurs. The decision has set alarms ringing because the state government has been extremely

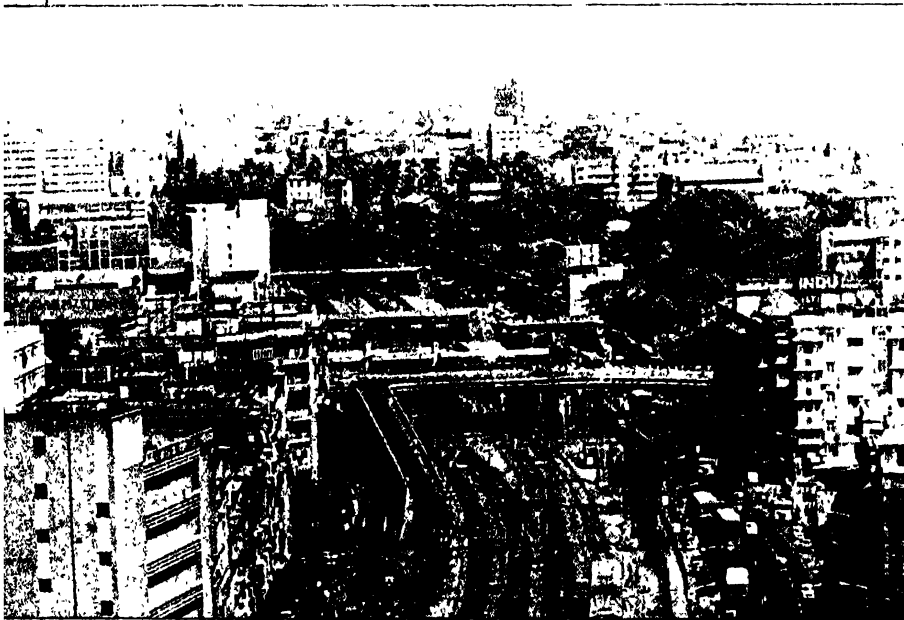
he was a major force in the state, although, in fact, his party on its own controlled just about five per cent of the total vote in Maharashtra. When the Congress(I) readmitted him, Pawar's supporters made out that the event was a great victory for the Congress(I) and downplayed the fact that it was Pawar who had the most reason to be relieved. Later, when his followers spearheaded the campaign to oust S.B. Chavan from chief ministership, it was touted that Pawar was the only leader capable of keeping the fractured Maharashtra Congress(I) together and that only he could counter the growing influence of the Shetkari Sanghatana and the Shiv Sena.

Pawar was also credited with being a highly competent administrator and a political strategist capable of winning over most sections of the electorate. The promise might not have matched performance, but, even his detractors admit, Pawar's real genius lies in his capacity to get across to people who

dination committees have superseded the authority of the All India Congress(I) Committee (that is the AICC-I) and have become the ultimate decision-making bodies for individual states. Shankaranand, therefore, has come to assume a crucial role in Pawar's political universe.

The consummate tactician that he is, Pawar has ensured that Shankaranand plays ball. Maharashtra Congress(I) leaders say that the Union law minister, during his visits to Bombay, is treated almost on par with the Prime Minister. He is received at the airport, usually by Pawar; housed at Raj Bhavan; and seen off by a delegation of state Congressmen. During his stay, one minister (usually Pawar's relative, state irrigation minister Dr Padamsingh Patil) is deputed to act as liaison between him and the state government. Party insiders hint that Shankaranand's son, who has business interests in Bombay, is also "looked after". And most important of

All pointers indicate that Pawar remains the high command's blue-eyed boy. The large chunk of state Congress leaders virulently opposed to him have, therefore, remained silent, not daring to openly come out against him



Overcrowded Bombay: starved of breathing space

matter, to influence opinion and charm his enemies into surrender.

In the present instance, Pawar has made sure that the party high command remains on his side. Towards this end, he is said to have cultivated two key people. The first is Captain Satish Sharma, who has the ear of the Prime Minister, and, second, Union law minister B. Shankaranand, who happens to be the chairman of the Congress(I)'s coordination committee for Maharashtra. The coordination committee, appointed by the Prime Minister, is responsible for monitoring and deciding party matters at the state level. In recent months, coor-

all, Sharad Pawar knows that Shankaranand needs help from a Maharashtra leader in the next election. For, his Lok Sabha constituency, Belgaum in Karnataka, has a large Marathi-speaking population that has been agitating for merger with Maharashtra. And Pawar's influence in Belgaum politics is not insignificant.

Shankaranand's blanket support for Pawar is, in the circumstances, only too comprehensible. Recently, the Union law minister, after being asked to look into the complaints against the Maharashtra chief minister, made it amply clear that Pawar, corruption charges

notwithstanding, continues to have his blessings. Pawar, said Shankaranand, would continue as chief minister before, as well as after, the next Lok Sabha polls. All other pointers indicate that Pawar remains the high command's blue-eyed boy. The principal secretary in the Prime Minister's office (PMO), B.G. Deshmukh, also visited Bombay at the time the media was almost daily headlining allegations against Pawar. Deshmukh made subtle enquiries, conferred with officials and left quietly. Since then, there has not been a peep from New Delhi. Even the large chunk of state Congress(I) leaders, virulently opposed to Pawar, have remained silent, not daring to openly go on the offensive.

Yet, it was a Congressman who first exploded the land 'dereservation' scam. Chandrashekhar Prabhu, an architect and Congress(I) MLA from Bombay, learnt that a few plots within his own constituency, earlier reserved for parks, dispensaries and schools, had been dereserved and handed back to the original landowners. Prabhu, a spirited, civic-minded MLA in his early thirties, decided to investigate, only to discover several astonishing facts. A few Bombay builders, he learnt, had begun approaching the original owners of plots that had been reserved for public purposes under the Greater Bombay Draft Development Plan (1981-2001). The Development Plan was aimed at creating civic facilities and open spaces in a city starved of land and breathing space. The idea was to reserve available land, compensate the original owners (at a rate fixed by the state government) and then



Bombay's Drive-In Theatre, which is to be converted into a diamond bourse: Pawar mediated in the deal

take over the land. This process was expected to take many years—chiefly because of the state government's financial constraints—and a lot of money (an estimated Rs 6,886 crores) to fully implement. Nevertheless, environmentalists and town planners realised this was the only hope for sustaining Bombay, which was getting increasingly choked with people.

The builders, on the other hand, were obviously more concerned with profits than the city's future and assured the owners of the reserved plots more money than the government could conceivably pay as compensation. The 'dereservations', according to Prabhu, were effected with the compliance of the state government's urban development department and the municipality's Planning Committee. On 11 April this year, Prabhu placed his charges before the Maharashtra Assembly, accusing Pawar and the Shiv Sena-controlled Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) of massive corruption. Prabhu revealed that the BMC would first recommend dereservation (for a consideration) and then the state government would okay it (for a larger consideration). Prabhu alleged that in one case, involving a plot at Mulund, the builder had paid the Planning Committee Rs 100 for every square foot and the chief minister's office Rs 250 per square foot. Prabhu's shocking disclosures did not, however, evoke much response. What really caused a sensation was Congress(I) MP and Bombay Regional Congress(I) Commit-

tee president Murli Deora's statement, quoted in a local newspaper, that the land scam involved Rs 2,000 crores. Deora later denied having made the remark, but after that Bombay's keen-scented watchdog committees could not let the matter alone.

At present, as many as six petitions against the 'dereservation' decision are pending with the Bombay High Court and are scheduled for admission on 31 July. And indignant citizens' groups, such as the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) and the Save Bombay Committee (SBC), which filed the petitions, are in no mood to let go. Says SBC's Kisan Mehta, "This is a bigger scandal than Antulay's because it affects over one per cent of the land area of Bombay and such a major decision should not have been taken secretly, with one stroke of the pen." Adds Prabhu, "It is not just the money that may have passed hands. What is more scandalous and worrisome is that



Bal Thackeray (left) and Sharad Pawar: secret collusion?

Sharad Pawar has not buckled under the barrage of accusations that make him out to be the most corrupt chief minister after the infamous A.R. Antulay. He is a survivor

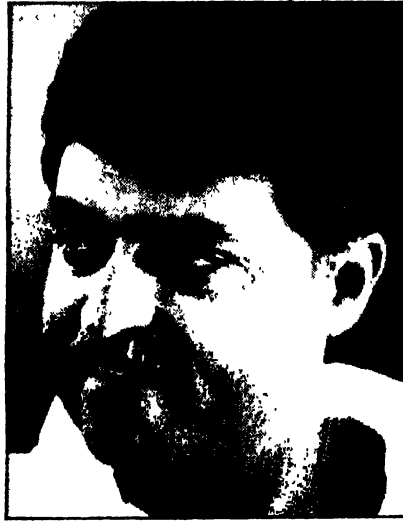
thousands of square metres of land have been mortgaged for ever. What is going to happen to the future generations with more and more people coming into the city?"

Manmohan P. Khanvilkar, the chairman of the Maharashtra chapter of the Indian Institute of Architects, has gone one step further and written to the Governor asking permission to prosecute Pawar under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The Governor's office has not rejected the petition and has said that the matter is "receiving the attention of His Excellency". Khanvilkar has, in the meantime, prepared a criminal complaint against the chief minister, urban de-

velopment minister Ishaque Jamkhanwala, urban development secretary Dinesh Kumar Jain and others, after investigating specific instances of dereservations. The available evidence seems to point incontrovertibly to the state government taking the initiative to dereserve the plots in utter disregard of existing laws.

Khanvilkar has cited three instances of dereservation to prop up his case: 28,000 square metres at Mafatlal Processing Mill meant for a hospital and dispensary, 23 acres at Bandra (East) for a theatre complex, and 11,000 square metres in Santa Cruz (West) for a public garden. In all three cases, he alleges, the state government had not received any recommendation for dere-

To make sure the high command remains on his side, Pawar has cultivated two key people: the Prime Minister's friend Satish Sharma and Shankaranand, who heads the coordination committee for Maharashtra



Shankaranand (left) and Satish Sharma: Pawar's political mentors

servation from the BMC Planning Committee and ordered their release unilaterally. The state government also directed the BMC to allow the owners of the three plots to develop them for residential and commercial use. The Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act, 1966, on the other hand, clearly stipulates that such decisions require public notification, hearings and debate. "The whole idea of the law was to take the public into confidence while taking a major civic development decision," says architect H.W. Gudal. "In this case, the state government's unilateral decisions have defeated the spirit and letter of the law." Khanvilkar's petition is even more trenchant: "Instead of acting in accordance with the law... (the accused) abused their position as chief minister, minister for urban development and secretary of urban development without any regard for public interest..." Khanvilkar accused all three of violating the Prevention of Corruption Act by "arbitrarily, unauthorisedly and illegally ordering dereservation of land which they could not

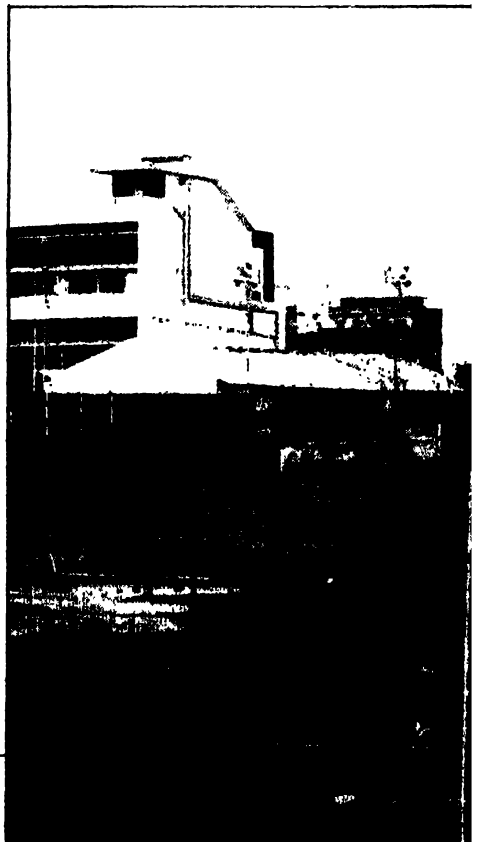
have done if they were not occupying the present position... (and) the manner in which the position has been abused creates strong suspicion that the accused themselves have obtained some pecuniary advantage in complicity with the owners or the lessees thereof".

Subsequent disclosures on the 'dereservation' scandal are believed to have been inspired by the Shiv Sena which is highly perturbed at being involved in the affair. BMC officials have taken the stand that the decisions were taken by the state government and merely passed on to them for implementation. Letters written by the urban development department suggest that the state government was directly involved and had gone so far as to correspond directly with the landowners. In one letter, addressed to the Daddysett Charity Trust, the urban development department wrote: "Upon due consideration of your representation and the legal position involved, it has been decided to delete the reservation proposed for recreation ground on the said lands." The Daddysett Trust was

thus gifted prime land at Malabar Hill, which was till then a cemetery. In a similar letter to The Estate Investment Company Pvt. Ltd, the department magnanimously declared: "... in view of your representation dated 5 December, 1988, it has been decided that you may be granted development permission to develop the land over site No. 127 for residential use..."

In yet another directive, Messrs Harshadray Pvt. Ltd was similarly favoured. The urban development department, in this case, not only ordered the dereservation of the land meant for a maternity home, dispensary and library, but also directed "that it has been decided the owners should be permitted to undertake development of the plot..." The state government had clearly exceeded its brief. BMC insiders disclose that the last director of town planning had not agreed to about 90 per cent of the dereservation cases but had been superseded by the state government. Consequently, the state government seems to have decided not to appoint a permanent director of town planning, a position which for the past four months has only had an acting director.

Chief minister Pawar has only compounded suspicions. Instead of coming clean, his every action has appeared to be aimed at confounding his critics. Firstly, he has steadfastly refused to divulge the details of the 'dereservations', the beneficiaries and



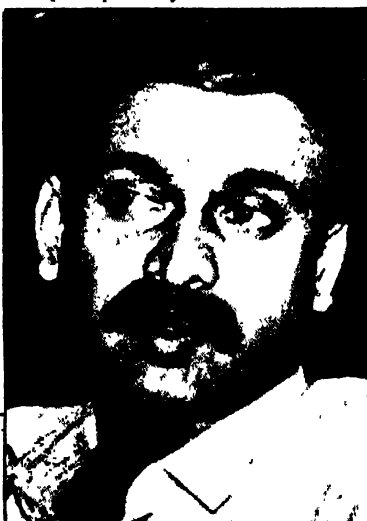
the plot numbers. His minister, Jamkhanwala, has only added to the confusion by giving different estimates of the number of plots dereserved. Initially, Jamkhanwala said that 285 plots were involved and later claimed that the number was 577. Nobody is sure what the actual figure is and when BEAG petitioned the court to request the state government to reveal the details, the latter replied that it was not bound to do so since the petition had not been formally admitted by the court. In the same breath, on 21 July, when the Opposition wanted to know about the dereservations, the state government declared that it could not talk about the case as the matter was *sub judice*—when, in fact, it had not been admitted by the court.

Pawar appears to be bent on putting off the day of judgement to after the Lok Sabha elections. When the scandal first surfaced in April this year, Pawar did not bother to comment. It was only in end-June when the media began speculating about his resignation that Pawar condescended to comment. After a hurried visit to New Delhi, he summoned a press conference where he announced that a commission of enquiry would be instituted to go into the dereservation issue.

At the same time, Pawar made no attempt to meet Chief Justice Chittatosh Mukherjee or ask for a judge to head the commission. During this period, all questions on dereservations would be

brushed aside on the ground that the enquiry commission would look into it. It is believed that Pawar was stalling till the formidable Justice B. Lentin retired on 30 June. Lentin, with his reputation for being a tough judge, might have gone out of his way to nail Pawar. At any rate, the chief minister requested for a judge only after 30 June. But so far, the Chief Justice has not selected one perhaps because the enquiry commission might interfere with the cases already submitted to the High Court. The court has also received a petition against the appointment of a judge for the enquiry commission. For, under recent amendments in the relevant Act, the government is not required to table the findings of the commission.

Secrecy has become the hallmark of the Pawar regime. And every pointer seems to suggest that this closedness is not prompted by the best of motives.



The dereserved plot at Haanabad Lane; (Inset) Chandrashekhar Prabhu: the Congressman who exploded the scam

Recently, the state chief secretary D. Sukhtankar issued a controversial circular to the secretaries of the departments, asking them not to blindly concur with illegal or questionable ministerial decisions. The circular said that secretaries must first try to explain to their ministers and then, if the minister still insisted, note down his objections clearly in the file. "In effect, the chief secretary was telling secretaries to create records against their ministers," said an agitated state Cabinet minister. Sukhtankar, who is reputed to be an upright bureaucrat, is reported to have attempted to get D.K. Jain transferred from the urban development department several times and failed. Jain has resisted all transfer attempts and has remained secretary of the department under three successive chief ministers—Shivajirao Nilangekar, S.B. Chavan and Pawar. Sukhtankar's circular was issued around the time the land 'dereservation' scandal first hit the headlines.

Pawar's Cabinet colleagues complain that they are not informed of major decisions (dereservation included) and that only a small coterie comprising a few Congressmen and bureaucrats are privy to all that is going on. And for understandable reasons too. Some bureaucrats claim that the chief minister has given the green signal for a host of questionable projects involving his business cronies. The principal beneficiaries include K.M. Goenka of Conwood Construction, the famed Dr Ranbir Maker, and 'Ravibhai' of Silver Constructions. Goenka's association with Pawar dates back more than ten years, to the time of the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) ministry. At that time, Pawar is said to have helped Goenka secure a vast tract of land at Thane. The land was released on the ground that it would be developed for housing members of the economically weaker sections. Goenka, however, sold the space at commercial rates.

More recently, Pawar is reported to have mediated in a deal between Dr Maker and Goenka, who has, in the process, acquired the rights to convert Drive-In Theatre into a diamond bourse. Maker, in exchange, is said to have been assured a major stake in the construction of a multi-storied, commercial parking lot at Nariman Point, next to the Assembly. Earlier, the Western India Automobile Association had offered to build the parking lot on a no-loss no-profit basis. 'Ravibhai', another of Pawar's builder cronies, is said to have bought up hundreds of acres of land at Nalasopara that had been denotified by the PDF ministry. This land, formerly



meant for agricultural purposes, was bought at 25 paise per square yard and is now selling at Rs 30 per square foot.

Some of these projects have been justified by Pawar's avowed policy of privatisation. Since last year, Pawar has been trying to encourage private entrepreneurs to build and manage public utilities, roads, highways and civic facilities. While the concept is attractive and makes sense given the state government's funds constraint, the dubious part is the manner in which Pawar is going about implementing privatisation. Instead of openly calling for offers from Bombay's business community at large,

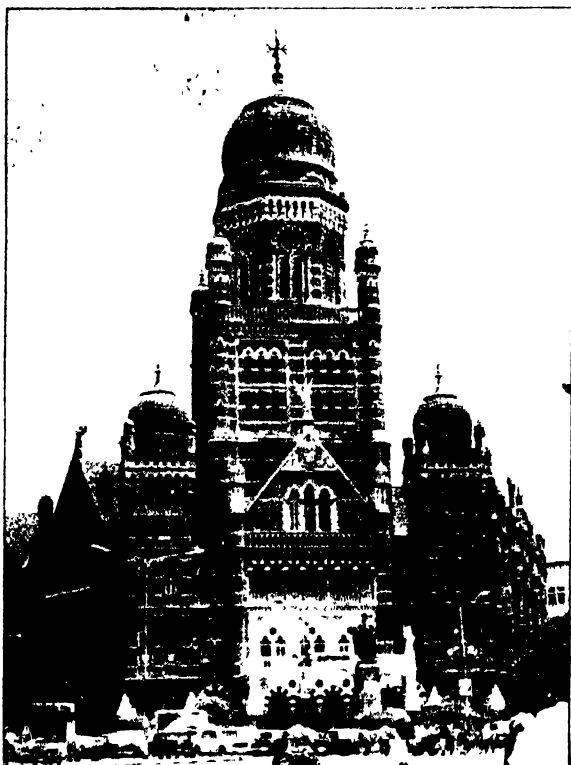
project and, in exchange, were promised the rights to thousands of acres of land adjoining the proposed highway. Later, Ajit Gulabchand of Hindustan Construction Company (HCC), who is believed to be close to Pawar, was roped in. When news leaked out, four industrialists—Ratan Tata, Keshub Mahindra, Nusli Wadia and A.N. Mafatlal—teamed up and submitted a skeleton proposal, although they had not been invited to do so. The four industrialists do not want to miss the opportunity to acquire exclusive developmental rights over thousands of acres of land. According to some reports, Reliance and HCC had worked

bureaucrats had registered their society. The IAS officers applied for registration on 2 September, 1988, and the registrar of societies cleared it the same day. The society's bank account too was opened on the same day. "It is probably the fastest registration on record," says Radhakrishnan. The land for the proposed 17-storey building belonged to the state government and there was no reason why it should have been transferred to a cooperative society. In all, 24 IAS officers will own flats in the building and most of them, fears Mehta, will sell them for a small fortune.

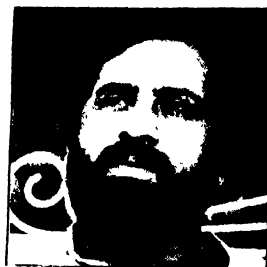
Several politicians too have reason to be grateful to Pawar. Among the plots dereserved was one at Hasnabad Lane in Santacruz (West) which incidentally belongs to the family of Najma Heptullah's husband. A few Youth Congress members, MLAs and at least one MP have been allotted government flats out of turn in Bombay. One of the biggest beneficiaries of Pawar's munificence is Suresh Kalmadi, one of the chief minister's trusted lieutenants and a rich Pune-based businessman. Kalmadi was made chairman of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) last year. The appointment raised several eyebrows as the post, by convention, is held by the state tourism minister. Kalmadi will now implement the plan to help private entrepreneurs set up 32 tourist complexes along the 720 km long Maharashtra coast. Kalmadi, along with Bombay's sheriff, Nana Chudasama, is also alleged to have acquired cheap agricultural land near Pune where the MTDC has set up a centre for water sports.

But Pawar cannot please all the people all the time. He might have feigned ignorance, declined to reply to the charges against him and persisted in the belief that he is untouchable. All this perhaps because he has an iron-clad defence up his sleeve. But the advantage of silence cannot hold good indefinitely. Presently, in the face of his steadfast refusal to disclose anything, the case for the prosecution has gained substance. Now he has to tell his side of the story. The six petitions on the 'dereservation' issue are scheduled to come up for admission on 31 July and if the court decides to issue even the mildest of strictures against him, Pawar will have no alternative but to go. All the precedents, involving equally powerful chief ministers such as Hegde and Antulay, point to such a denouement. But Pawar's fate could be different: he has only to sell his story to the court.

**Indranil Banerjee/Bombay
with Olga Tellis**



The Bombay Municipal Corporation: passing the buck?



One of the biggest beneficiaries of Pawar's munificence is Congressman Suresh Kalmadi, who was appointed MTDC chairman

he has chosen to limit the participants to a small group of business friends. Pawar was forced to reveal details of the negotiations on the construction of privately-owned highways on 19 July in the Assembly and has had to go on record to say that he will invite open tenders at the time the projects are finalised. Pawar's admissions, however, conceal more than they reveal.

Laxmanrao Hatankar, minister of state for public works, for instance, disclosed to the Assembly that four companies had submitted proposals for constructing a link between Bombay island and the mainland. What he omitted to mention was the precise sequence of events. Initially, only Reliance had been called; the Ambanis were told to raise finances for this multi-crore rupee

overtime to prepare a bulky 5,000-odd-page report on the proposal.

If Pawar has largely succeeded in getting his way, it is because he is a fixer. Several key bureaucrats have been won over with flats and land. In one instance, the bureaucrats acquired 33,000 square feet of prime land on the waterfront at Napean Sea Road in an area called Rocky Flats. The allotment, according to the SBC's Kisan Mehta, who has filed a petition on this issue, was made by the state government "in the most surreptitious manner, without any public notice whatsoever and for a song". What is more, says S. Radhakrishnan, legal counsel for the SBC, the government issued a letter of allotment on 31 August, 1988, even before the

Of accords and discord

Rajiv Gandhi's policy of appeasement falls flat

A joke newspapermen were often entertained with by friendly government officials until sometime ago ran as follows. Two companies decide to sign a collaboration agreement between themselves. A little hitch crops up at the last minute. The representative of one of the companies wants the word "accord" removed because he is afraid it will violate copyright. "I thought the Prime Minister enjoyed a monopoly on accords, we dare not try to vie with him."

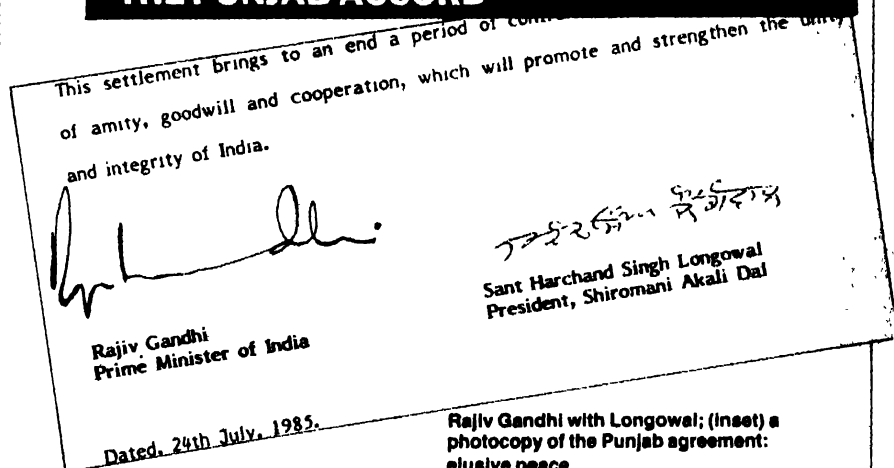
Sick though it may sound, nothing illustrates Rajiv Gandhi's obsession with playing troubleshooter better than this piece of anecdote. The only difficulty is that in the end, in each case, it has got him into more trouble. Already, the PM holds a record for the number of political agreements he has signed in five years—virtually all of which have turned out to be just so many empty words, mirages and damp squibs.

Each accord was a different cup of tea. If Punjab was the most momentous, Mizoram was important, while the Assam accord was a veritable surprise. "The rest were only euphemistically referred to as accords and in some cases, the Congress(I) created the problem itself," says a home ministry source. There was the accord with the CPI(M) government and the TNV (Tribal National Volunteers) of Tripura, the GNLF (Gorkha National Liberation Front)-West Bengal government accord, and the one with the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir. In these cases, either the Congress(I) was responsible for fomenting trouble, or the political adversary was keen to come to terms with it.

Signing the accords meant a complete reversal of the official position and desire to "heal a wound". The Assam accord was a somersault from the position Governor L.P. Singh and his adviser M.L. Kampani took in 1978. Before Rajiv Gandhi came to power after the 1984 general election, the Union government showed an eagerness to appease majority sentiment. But following the election, addressing itself to minority grievances became its principal concern. This was true of both the Punjab and Assam accords.



THE PUNJAB ACCORD



Rajiv Gandhi with Longowal; (inset) a photocopy of the Punjab agreement: elusive peace

But why did none of them materialise? Each had its drawbacks: since they were signed in a hurry, not enough thought was given to the implementation aspect. They were weak on legalities and technicalities and, as one home ministry official pointed out, "Thanks to governmental myopia, certain clauses were written into the agreements which literally strangled these accords." He goes on: "To an extent, the Union government took advantage of the lack of expertise of its adversaries." The Punjab accord promised a transfer of territories from Punjab to Haryana "in lieu of Chandigarh". Surveys were con-

ducted and two Supreme Court judges went over the matter. But no transfer took place, as the official says, "because there were no territories to be transferred". So Chandigarh stayed where it was.

One of the most unfortunate events which resulted from the resurgence of terrorism in Punjab was the assassination of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal in 1985. Recalls Akali Dal MP, Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, "He lived for barely 24 days after signing the accord on 24 July." But it wasn't Longowal's death alone which stymied the agreement, Ramoowalia argues, but a definite lack of

will on the part of the Rajiv Gandhi government. "When they signed the agreement," he says, "the government was keen that the problem be solved. But later, it started backtracking because it gave primacy to the Congress(I)'s political interests." He adds: "Now people have lost faith in the Prime Minister and the situation has become so dangerous that no Akali leader is willing to show the sort of courage and initiative that Sant Longowal showed. No Akali leader is willing to meet the fate of Longowal and Surjit Singh Barnala."

According to the agreement Sant Longowal and Rajiv Gandhi signed in New Delhi in 1985, the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal was supposed to be completed by 31 March, 1986; Chandigarh was to be transferred to Punjab and, in return, certain territories in Punjab were to be transferred to Haryana. None of this happened. When the agreement was signed, Bhajan Lal was in power in Haryana. He had no choice but to give his consent to the accord—without even being a party to it. But after Devi Lal campaigned against the raw deal the accord had given Haryana, and won the 1987 Assembly poll, the climate changed. Both Haryana and Rajasthan differed with Punjab on the division of Ravi-Beas waters. Haryana claimed that the signatories to the accord decided the issue at a time when minimum water was flowing into Haryana. Rajasthan also complained it was getting too little. And hopes of these two states adhering to the agreement on the sharing of river waters evaporated.

In negotiating the Assam accord, sources say, the government took advantage of the inexperienced young people—the All Assam Students Union (AASU)—they had to deal with. Says an official: "The AASU boys didn't realise that the government could say something on paper and never implement it, simply because implementing it would be very difficult." For instance, even if a provision was made in the agreement to appoint tribunals to deal with the problem of citizenship, the Centre hedged it in such a manner that the appointment and unavailability of officials and procedural problems ultimately made the task of checking the infiltration of foreigners very difficult.

According to home ministry sources, the ministry of external affairs is reluctant to take up the detection of foreigners. An official says he has information that 50,000 to 80,000 foreigners live in Delhi's Chandni Chowk area alone. But they are practically impossible to detect. A military intelligence estimate



THE ASSAM ACCORD



THE MIZORAM ACCORD

puts the number of foreigners in the country at two to three lakhs. But since there has been no proper census in Assam or Jammu and Kashmir, it is a phenomenon the country has to live with.

The fencing of the international boundary remains a dead clause. "Work on only a few km of roads and fences has started, and progress has been very slow," complains Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) MP Dinesh Goswami. If the argument is that erecting such a fence is not a practical proposition, how is it that in Punjab, the government has been able to build a fence along the boundary with Pakistan over a considerable distance? Minister of state for home affairs P. Chidambaram declared that the fencing in Punjab would be completed by 31 August this year. The rains came in the

way. But substantial progress has already been made there. Some 100 km of full fencing and 100 km of partial fencing are complete. Why can't this be done in Assam?

The Assam accord fixed 1971 as the cut-off year for detection of foreigners. But there is still too much confusion over this. "The process of detecting foreigners is too cumbersome and dilatory," Goswami says. "There is no uniform law to deal with such cases. In Mizoram it is the Foreigners Act, in Assam it is not. There is no proper procedure to expel foreigners."

The Congress(I) has also been exploiting the issue of the Bodo agitation. Says Goswami: "We have already invited them for talks, but we are still waiting for a response." Some people in the Union home ministry have been in



THE DARJEELING ACCORD



THE TNP ACCORD

(Clockwise, from far left) Rajiv with Laldenga; the signing of the Assam accord; Subash Ghisingh signs the Darjeeling accord; Tripura CM S.R. Majumdar greets Bijoy Hrangkhawl after the TNP agreement; unfulfilled promises

touch with the Bodo leaders, he alleges. "The whole effort has been to divide Assam into emotional groups." An official, however, points out that the AGP leaders have only themselves to blame for the agitation because "their own movement was based on narrow ethnic demands which antagonised other minorities"

The accord between the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) and the West Bengal government has made relatively better progress. The only hitch is that unrest in Darjeeling may not be over, after all. There is sporadic violence. Extremists like Chhatre Subba, a disgruntled section of the GNLF and some Congressmen have formed a splinter group which continues to clamour for an independent Gorkha-

land. "If anything, this has only led to a polarisation between those who stand for the accord and those who do not," says the CPI(M) MP from Darjeeling, Ananda Pathak. Priority has now been accorded to restoring peace and normalcy, rehabilitation of those affected by the violence, tourism and development, Pathak says.

The Tripura and Mizoram accords reaped a political harvest for the Congress(I). In Tripura, it was the inability of the CPI(M)-run government of Nripen Chakraborty to tackle an insurgency by 400-500 people led by Bijoy Hrangkhawl that brought about its downfall. To make things worse, Chakraborty, on 31 December, 1987, put his signature to an agreement with the central government consenting to the declaration of Tripura as a "disturbed area"

handing over power to the Congress(I) on a platter. Says a home ministry official: "It was a calculated move by the Centre, and it managed to use its tools, the IAS and IPS, very well." The Congress(I) won the election.

The Mizoram accord ended 20 years of insurgency and brought a heroic Laldenga to power in a keenly fought election. But the Congress(I) came back to power, soon. Normalcy was restored, and development work begun. "But in the north-east," a home ministry official says, "it is always hard to say. The end of one insurgency is the beginning of another." Besides, development work is still very slow. The state still suffers from a siege mentality and with the insurgency now over, for the time being, the urgency to solve the state's economic problems has disappeared.

The other accord—the one between the Congress(I) and Farooq Abdullah's National Conference—in Jammu and Kashmir is also in a mess. If the intention was to maintain the Centre's hold over an emotionally volatile people, it hasn't worked. Violence is on the rise, and arms are being smuggled into the state through its international border. Also, the communal division between Jammu and Kashmir was never more stark.

The Centre has traditionally been soft on Jammu and Kashmir. But it has also followed double standards. Says a home ministry official: "If there was violence of this kind at any other time, the Centre would have taken over the administration." In fact, it has taken draconian measures for less provocation in the past. But in the NC-Congress(I) alliance, it is hard to say who is in the driver's seat and who is riding the pillion. The Centre's main aim in entering into an alliance with the NC was to revamp the state's intelligence network to monitor the new groups of militants that have sprung up, making the border more secure to check infiltration, speeding up development and addressing itself to popular grievances. But all this has only been talked about for a year.

The availability of arms, resurgence of communal violence and anti-national activities, is a cause for concern. For the first time, BSF has been deployed on internal security duties in Jammu and Kashmir. Do the National Conference or the Congress(I) have the political will and ability to fight this trend together? If it has failed so far, how can it claim the right to continue in power when it has unseated other governments for less important reasons?

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi



The search for peace

Will Benazir Bhutto respond to Rajiv Gandhi's initiative?

It was a study in contrast. The Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, sharp, alert, witty and brimming with confidence. His Pakistani counterpart, Benazir Bhutto, on the other hand, hesitant, fumbling for words and distinctly shaky when confronted with embarrassing questions. The much-awaited joint press conference by the two Prime Ministers was scheduled to begin in Islamabad on 17 July at exactly 8 am, but the vast army of national and international newsmen who had assembled was kept waiting for another 45 minutes as both Rajiv and Benazir had closeted themselves to give the final touches to the joint statement that was to be issued.

The tone of the press conference was set by Dileep Padgaonkar, editor of *The Times of India*. Even before a smiling Benazir could settle down, Padgaonkar shot off a question that startled everyone: "Do you endorse your President's view that India has hegemonistic designs in the region?" Benazir was speechless for a few minutes, looked embarrassingly at Rajiv Gandhi seated next to her and then spoke to her foreign minister, Sahabzada Yakub Khan. Only then did Benazir come out with an answer—an ambiguous one—that as she had not read the particular statement of President Ishaq Khan, she was not in a position to give her views on it.

But the fact is that only a day before, on 16 July, the Pakistani President, Ishaq Khan, had told the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi: "The impression about India is that it has hegemonistic designs. This impression may be wrong but it is necessary to remove it." The President's provocative comment was telecast in the Urdu and English news bulletins of Pakistan TV on 16 July. The next day's newspapers, too, gave prominent coverage to his comment. No wonder, Benazir was quite taken aback when confronted with the question and she could never regain her composure after that. Throughout the press conference, Benazir was shaky, and she always consulted her foreign minister before answering questions from Indian scribes. Rajiv Gandhi, in contrast, was witty and dismissed queries with convincing arguments.

However, the most important aspect of the joint press conference was the atmosphere of cordiality and frankness in which it was conducted. No frayed tempers or snubs. Perhaps this is the reason why the two leaders disagreed over many issues in public.

The Pakistani nuclear programme was one such issue over which Rajiv and Benazir did not see eye to eye. The Indian Prime Minister was the first to provoke Benazir on this count. Rajiv

said that India viewed Pakistan's nuclear programme with suspicion as the whole experiment was being controlled by the Pak army. Benazir came out with a defence but it was hardly convincing. There were many other contentious issues but there were areas too where the two Prime Ministers thought alike: notably Punjab and Siachen.

What did Rajiv Gandhi's one-day visit to Pakistan achieve? Those who had thought that all the problems would be sorted out in just 16 hours were clearly disappointed. But the flying visit did prove that the two leaders were beginning to trust each other. To have expected that the age-old mistrust between India and Pakistan would come to an end as soon as Rajiv Gandhi landed in Islamabad would have been too far-fetched. After all, there is genuine reason for both the countries to be suspicious of each other. If Pakistan is worried of India's defence capability, India too has every reason to fear Pakistan's nuclear programme.

This is precisely the reason why I did not expect a miracle. But many others did. A young journalist accompanying the Prime Minister re-

While talking of normalisation of Indo-Pak relations, one must remember that after decades of hostility, nothing can be achieved in a hurry



marked: "I don't understand why Rajiv Gandhi came here when nothing much was expected." My colleague was perhaps unaware that an Indian Prime Minister visiting Pakistan after a gap of 30 years was an achievement—and a milestone—by itself. The stage has now been set for Benazir Bhutto's visit to India. And, both the leaders agreed that unless there is a free flow of information between the two sides and unless the people of the two countries get to know each other more intimately, there can be no improvement in Indo-Pak relations.

When we landed in Islamabad on the evening of 16 July, the 19-gun salute with which Rajiv Gandhi was greeted ended a long era of hostility and mutual suspicion. There were smiles on the faces of both the Indian and Pakistani sides. But both the Prime Ministers were aware that a large number of Pakistani politicians were out to attack them and make political capital out of the visit. General Zia's followers in particular and the Pakistani Urdu press were constantly harping on the point that by arriving at an agreement over the disputed Kashmir question, Benazir Bhutto was actually selling Pakistan's interests to India. These people had planned a big protest meeting in Larkana, and Benazir, fully aware of their strength, decided against having the street from Islamabad airport to Baluchistan House lined with flag-waving people. At the airport, however, Rajiv Gandhi was given a warm welcome.

The Pakistani Prime Minister, however, faces an uphill task in her effort to improve Indo-Pak relations. One should remember that President Ishaq Khan's comment about India having hege-

(From left) Rajiv Gandhi inspecting a guard of honour in Islamabad; Rajiv and Benazir holding negotiations; coming closer

To have expected that the age-old mistrust between India and Pakistan would come to an end as soon as Rajiv Gandhi landed in Islamabad would have been too far-fetched. After all, there is genuine reason for both the countries to be suspicious of each other

monistic designs was not directed against the Indian Prime Minister; it was meant to isolate and embarrass Benazir Bhutto. Reason: Ishaq Khan is influenced by those people who believe that India and Pakistan can never be friends.

Moreover, Benazir Bhutto does not have the two-thirds majority in Parliament which would enable her to push through legislations. President Khan too is a thorn in her path: he constantly encourages the followers of the late Zia-ul-Haq who are sworn enemies of Benazir. What is more, Benazir Bhutto rules in constant fear of being overthrown: the 8th amendment to the Pakistani Constitution enables the President to dismiss the government whenever he chooses to do so.

Benazir Bhutto is also under attack from the fundamentalists who are trying to sell the idea that the Pakistani PM has sold out to India. Here are some instances of their activities.

- Recently, about 1,000 Kashmiri boys held an anti-India demonstration in front of the UNO office. The demonstration was organised by the President of Pak-Occupied Kashmir, Sardar Qayyum Khan. The students shouted slogans saying that Benazir had stopped talking about the status of Kashmir just to please India.

- Sayeeda Abida Hussain, a member of the National Assembly, said on the eve of Rajiv Gandhi's visit that when Jawaharlal Nehru visited Pakistan in 1960, he had taken away two important rivers. This time his grandson would take much more, Sayeeda's statement added.

It is not that Benazir is unaware of the threats from such elements. But there are other important issues as well that she will have to tackle. Sind is in turmoil and Punjab is totally opposed to her. The Pakistan army is also a source of danger. But the biggest problem for Benazir at the moment is to keep the chief minister of Punjab, Nawaz Sharif, in check. The flamboyant chief minister does not lose an opportunity to run down his Prime Minister. What is more disturbing is that Sharif has begun to whip up Punjabi sentiments to counter Benazir Bhutto.

While talking of normalisation of Indo-Pak relations, one must remember that after decades of hostility, nothing can be achieved in a hurry. The key to success is caution and restraint. Rajiv Gandhi and the people of India may be eager to normalise relations with Pakistan but Benazir Bhutto has many problems in rushing to a decision. Though Benazir said boldly that "a policy of friendship should never become hostage to partisan interests", she is fully aware that to survive in Pakistani politics, one has to take an anti-India stance. That is precisely the reason why Benazir hesitatingly agreed to tour India later this year.

It is to the credit of Benazir that despite the hurdles, she has held out an olive branch. After 40 years, Rajiv and Benazir have got an opportunity to create history. But both the leaders must realise that history is never created in a huff; it has to be built over a period of time with caution and care. The first initiative has been taken by India. It is up to Pakistan to respond.



The war within

Akali Dal leaders squabble over the question of amending the party constitution

Ironically enough, it was New Delhi, and more precisely the Congress(I), which gave the warring Akali factions in Punjab the impetus to get their act together. When the Centre amended the Representation of Peoples Act last month and made it mandatory for all political parties wanting to contest elections to reaffirm their faith in the "principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India", all the groups of the splintered Akali Dal came out in protest against the move. The Akalis, irrespective of their allegiance, were angry that the Delhi rulers dared to question their commitment to national integration. But in the end, the Akalis ended up quarrelling over whether the Akali Dal should amend its constitution rather than pre-

sending a united front to face the threat.

Expectedly, the Akali Dal (Longowal), headed by former chief minister Surjit Singh Barnala, took a moderate stand on the issue and decided to amend its constitution to conform to the amended Act. Barnala said that the necessary change would be incorporated in the party constitution after a thorough discussion at all levels.

Barnala's rival faction, the Akali Dal led by Jagdev Singh Talwandi, is yet to make up its mind. However, two of the faction's heavyweights, Prakash Singh Badal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra—both of whom are in jail—are reportedly against amending the party constitution. The two imprisoned leaders, however, are playing it safe and have not come out with any categorical statement. Political observers in Punjab feel that both Badal

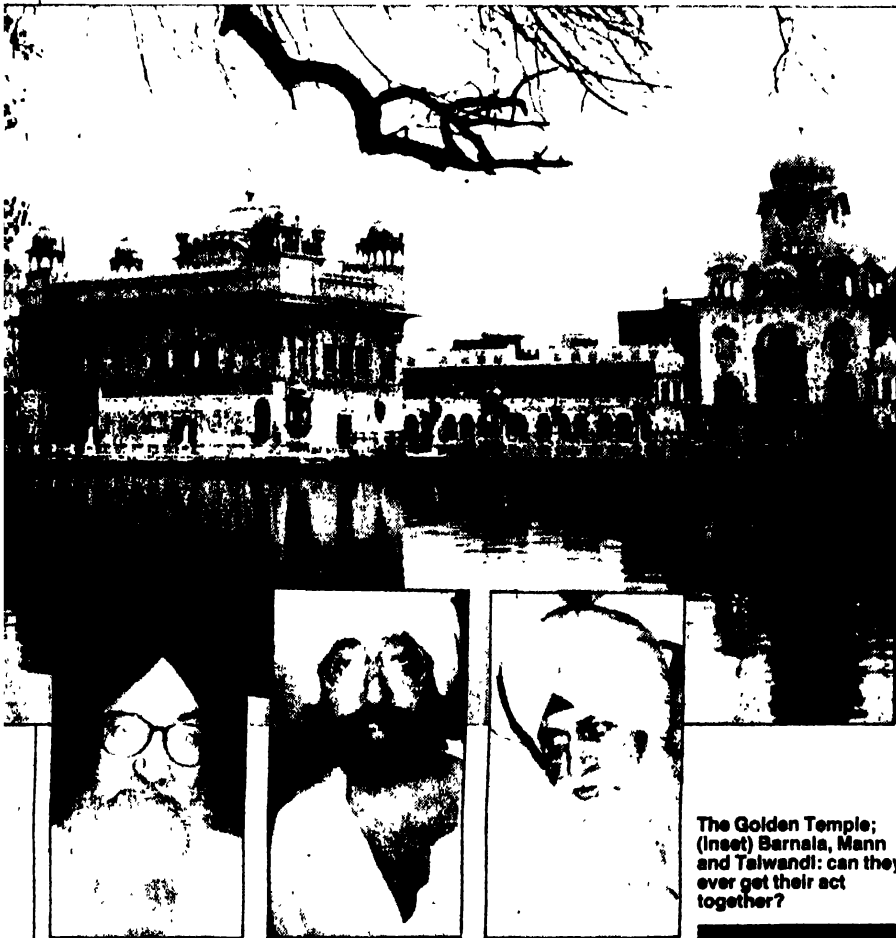
and Tohra are almost certain that elections will not be held in Punjab along with the rest of the country and as such they see no reason why the party should rush through with a decision.

The third important Akali faction has, however, made its intentions quite clear. Led by the former IPS officer, Simranjit Singh Mann, this group has chosen a path of confrontation with the Centre. Last week, Gurtej Singh, one of the general secretaries of the faction, challenged the constitutional validity of the amendment in the Punjab High Court. A former IAS officer of the Punjab cadre, Gurtej Singh has contended in the writ petition that the amended Act threatens the very existence of the minority communities. Singh further pointed out in his prayer that the constitution of the Shiromani Akali Dal was secular in spirit and that the amendment violates Articles 25, 26, 29 and 30 of the Constitution of India. Gurtej Singh has also expressed the fear that the Election Commission would not register the Akali Dal as a political party as only Sikhs are entitled to be primary members of the party, enjoying voting rights.

Hesitant to take the lead, the Talwandi faction is awaiting the outcome of the writ petition filed by Mann's followers. A favourable verdict will save them the embarrassment of having to amend their party constitution. What is perhaps more important, the Talwandi faction will then get an opportunity to label its rival, the Longowal group, which has already decided to conform to the amended Act, as pro-Centre.

But the Akali Dal (Talwandi) leaders are maintaining a safe distance from the Mann faction. Reason: the party bigwigs feel that if the writ petition is turned down by the High Court, the Mann faction might decide to boycott the forthcoming polls. Moreover, waiting for the High Court's verdict will give the Akali Dal(T) some time to iron out its internal differences. It is an open secret that two stalwarts of the faction, Talwandi and Tohra, are fighting for the control of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC).

A large number of Tohra's supporters had openly revolted against Talwandi when the latter tried to remove Manjit



The Golden Temple; (Inset) Barnala, Mann and Talwandi: can they ever get their act together?

Singh Calcutta, a front-man of Tohra, from the post of SGPC general secretary. A split was somehow averted at the last moment after Badal intervened and suggested a compromise formula. More recently, Talwandi got into a row with another heavyweight of Sikh politics—the Akal Takht chief Darshan Singh Ragi. An angry Ragi even issued a show-cause notice to Talwandi for admitting a Nirankari into the Akali Dal.

The Akali Dal (Mann) has also taken a rigid stand as far as the unity of the Akali factions is concerned. Gurtej Singh told SUNDAY that there was no question of joining hands with the other Akali groups unless their leaders accepted the leadership of Simranjit Singh Mann. Whatever they may say in public, all the Akali faction stalwarts are only too eager to have the Mann group on their side as the latter enjoys the support of both the All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) and the Damdami Taksal, the fountain-head of militancy in Punjab.

Gurtej Singh says that his party has decided to challenge the Centre's move on two counts. Firstly, the Mann faction feels that the Election Commission has been given the power to accept or reject a party's application. More important, Gurtej Singh thinks that it is unfair to compel all parties to abide by the principles of socialism. "Can't we bring peace and prosperity through capitalism?" he asks. A confused and ambiguous stand, to say the least. Barnala, however, is more forthright in his views. "Our first Guru, Nanak Devji, was the biggest socialist the world has ever seen," the former chief minister said, adding, "Guru Nanak also preached secularism and he opposed casteism and untouchability."

Political observers feel that Barnala's interpretation of these crucial terms, which political parties have to incorporate in their constitution, will come in handy for those Akali leaders who are now making a big issue out of the Centre's move. After all, none of them can afford not to contest the forthcoming elections.

Vipul Mudgal/Chandigarh

"The Akali Dal is a democratic and secular party"

Surjit Singh Barnala on the allegation that the Akalis are communal

SUNDAY: What is your reaction to the recent amendment to the Representation of Peoples Act?

S.S. Barnala: The question is of our registration as a political party. We are discussing the issue at the party's district level.

Is your move to launch the Muslim wing of the Akali Dal(L) also a part of the same process?

We always had Muslims in the party. Both Hindus and Muslims have been adequately represented in

are completely different when they visit gurudwaras.

Do you think Rajiv Gandhi will play the "Punjab card" in the coming elections?

He will try to do so. His partymen have already started calling the Anandpur Sahib Resolution a secessionist document. They are comparing it with the Muslim League resolution of 1940. They have suddenly remembered all this after five years when the elections are approaching.

Do you think circumstances will force the Akali factions to unite?

The last unity meeting (at Simranjit Singh Mann's village last month) failed because it was not properly organised. Unity talks are possible in a meeting, not in a public *jalsa*.

The general impression is that the Mann faction of the Akali Dal has the support of pro-militant elements. Don't you think their faith in Mann's leadership would initiate them into mainstream politics?

May be. They might be able to project their views through the Mann faction. They accept Mann as their leader but they don't accept others in the party. The things are not very clear because nobody can read the minds of the militants.

Will a united Akali party with the backing of the militants be the ideal proposition?

The Akali Dal is a democratic party. It has nothing to do with extremism. It is a political party committed to non-violent methods of protest. The ideal proposition would be a unity of all the factions which believe in the democratic process.

Some of the Congress leaders are trying to sign a new accord with the militants. Do you think this will improve the situation?

People have been talking about it. It might be helpful for some. People have been saying that the situation can improve only if all the factions agree to lay down arms.



Barnala cleaning shoes of devotees as a mark of penance: mixing religion and politics

the party. They have even been ministers.

What is your reaction to the Congress' allegation that the Akalis are communal because they discriminate between their members?

In fact, the Congress is more communal than us. In Mizoram, they were trying to please the Christians. Their programmes and attitudes change according to communities and constituencies. They say different things at temples and mosques. They

Friends all

The Dal aims to please the left even as it woos the BJP

As its president V.P. Singh goes on vacillating, the Janata Dal continues to confuse everybody. On the one hand, it claims that the left is its "natural ally". On the other, it holds seat adjustment talks with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Taking care not to antagonise the left parties and, perhaps more importantly, the Muslim voters, the Janata Dal has been negotiating with the BJP, which is crucial in the electoral politics of the Hindi belt. The BJP does not like this and knows it is being used. Last week BJP general secretary K.L. Sharma told SUNDAY that V.P. Singh's recent statements had "harmed mutual confidence". The reference was to news reports from Jaipur (the Raja addressed a meeting there on 9 July) which quoted the Dal president as having ruled out the possibility of his party and the National Front sharing power with the BJP in the event of an Opposition victory in the coming poll.

The assertion was front-paged (VP: 'No power sharing with the BJP') by the 10 July *Indian Express*. But the very next day, George Fernandes, chairman of the Dal campaign committee, told journalists in Delhi that the Raja had been "misquoted in a section of the press". Fernandes claimed he had spoken to Singh who had clarified that he had said at a press conference at Jaipur that the Janata Dal would not share power with any party that did not share its policies and programmes. In any case, Fernandes added, it was premature to speculate on the sharing of power; the question would arise only after the elections.

Soon after, the Raja and Arun Nehru went to BJP president L.K. Advani's house for dinner and cleared all misunderstandings. According to BJP sources, the Singh-Nehru duo told the BJP president that the Dal wanted to arrive at seat adjustments with the BJP. Interestingly enough, shortly after this dinner, newspapers once again quoted the Raja (this time in Lucknow) as saying that his party will not have any alliance with the BJP.

"Having a dialogue on seat adjust-

ments and talking in terms which do not help this process cannot be appreciated," thundered an angry K.L. Sharma. But Sharma as well as others in the BJP know the risk of not fighting the elections alongside the Dal. However, the negotiations have made very little progress so far. Early last month, a round of talks was held between the central leadership of the Dal and that of the BJP. Though both sides were keen on arriving at a 'fair' formula for seat adjustments, it was clear from the start that very serious differences existed as far as UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were concerned—in short, the Hindi belt states.

In Uttar Pradesh, which sends 85 MPs to Parliament, the BJP feels it deserves 35 seats. The Dal till date has agreed to give it a dozen. "The basis of seat adjustments should be past performance and present reality. We think we are on a strong wicket in UP. Look at the results of the civic elections," says K.L. Sharma. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP feels it poses the only challenge to the ruling Congress party and the Dal does not deserve more than three or four seats. The Dal, however, will settle for no less than ten. "Part of the prob-



Taking care not to antagonise the left parties and the Muslim voters, the Janata Dal has been negotiating with the BJP, which is crucial in the Hindi belt

lem is that we don't know who represents the Dal in MP. Dal leaders talk to us in their individual capacities. V.C. Shukla says something; somebody else says something else..." complained a senior BJP leader last week.

In Bihar, however, both parties appear to be more or less reconciled to the fact that seat adjustments would have to be on a 50:50 basis. But the problem, point out BJP members, are intra-Dal fights which cast a shadow of doubt on who exactly is the party spokesman in the state. Ram Sunder Dass is ostensibly the boss, but Raghunath Jha, the ousted state chief of the Dal, has not lost hopes of regaining his post. In Gujarat, things took a dramatic turn recently when, defying the principle of one Opposition candidate per seat—the *sine qua non* for victory, as indicated in Allahabad—the BJP and the Dal both put up their own nominees in the Ahmedabad Corporation elections. The Dal candidate lost to the BJP, vindicating the party leadership's assertion that the Dal needs its support to be victorious in the forthcoming elections.

V.P. Singh with Jyoti Basu (right): appeasing the left



"At this stage, while we are talking of seat adjustments, both parties (the BJP and the Janata Dal) should be cautious about not saying anything that would harm the talks," asserts the BJP leadership—obviously criticising Dal president V.P. Singh's much-publicised ambivalence. But are Singh's statements as arbitrary as they seem? No, insist senior Dal leaders. "The Muslim vote is going to be the crucial factor in the Hindi belt," explains a Dal strategist. And it is this realisation which is behind the party president's ambiguity vis-à-vis the BJP. The Dal leaders are very keen on not alienating the minorities.

On the other hand, they realise that seat adjustments with the BJP are absolutely essential if Opposition votes are not to be split. Their problem is how to cash in on anti-Congress sentiments currently prevalent amongst the minorities, especially in the Hindi heartland, and yet not sever tactical links with the BJP.

According to partymen, the strategy adopted by the Dal to attain this goal is as follows. The central leadership will studiously avoid making any statements suggesting that *bonhomie* exists between the party and the BJP. Because this would have far more serious reper-



L.K. Advani (left) and V.P. Singh: prospective poll partners?

cussions than such assertions by state leaders. Ideally, Dal leaders, especially president V.P. Singh, would like to refrain from making any comments on the nature of the party's relations with the BJP. However, faced with probing questions by persistent scribes, no politician can maintain a vow of silence on any issue. So, the strategy is to be as ambiguous as possible.

But will this double-talk appease the left parties and the crucial Muslim voters? Dal leaders confidently assert that the party's strategy will work. Said

CPI(M) general secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad last week, "I don't think that there will be an alliance between the BJP and the Janata Dal." That is exactly what V.P. Singh has been saying, points out a close aide of the Raja. So 'seat adjustments' and not 'alliance' is the operative phrase. Dal leaders privately assert that the "left is not half as cut up about the current state of affairs as public statements by some of its leaders may suggest". However, they point out, such statements have to be made because the left has its 'image' to maintain.

Though seat adjustment talks between the Dal and the BJP are proceeding sluggishly, both sides hope that all differences will be resolved once poll dates are announced. "Parties do not agree on seat adjustments unless there is a clear indication of elections," says a BJP general secretary. BJP leaders hope that by July-end, when Devi Lal and Atal Behari Vajpayee—the two leaders authorised by their respective parties to coordinate the seat adjustment talks—resume discussions, matters will improve. "We must be clear on the question of seat-sharing by September because we have our national council meeting in Bombay then. After that our poll campaign will start with full gusto," explained a senior BJP leader last week.

Only then will the Janata Dal's position become clear. Till then V.P. Singh is likely to keep both the BJP and the left parties guessing about where his sympathies truly lie.

Patralekha Chatterjee/New Delhi



"Having a dialogue on seat adjustments and talking in terms which do not help this process cannot be appreciated," says BJP general secretary K.L. Sharma angrily



Beauty and the brain

The reunion of Jayalalitha and Veerappan makes the AIADMK a force to reckon with in Tamil Nadu politics

They complement each other perfectly. One of them is something of a political novice, who trades on glamour, fame and her capacity to rally crowds and garner votes. The other, while lacking charisma and influence over the electorate, is a clever and experienced politician, a master at the game of manipulative party politics. Together, Jayalalitha Jayaram and R.M. Veerappan—once the most bitter of enemies—believe they can work magic: restore the confidence of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) members, rejuvenate the party organisation and win the battle against chief minister M. Karunanidhi. "You've got to admit," says a political observer, "the AIADMK now has both beauty and brains."

Perhaps. But Veerappan's induction into the party (he was taken on as joint general secretary on 13 July) has been met with suspicion, doubts and despair in certain quarters of the AIADMK. And Jayalalitha—who pleaded that Veerappan be welcomed into the party—will need to find ways of convincing her supporters that her decision to accommodate him is in the best interests of the AIADMK.

Many Jayalalitha loyalists—who stood by her after the party split into two after MGR's death—now fear for their political futures. The worry is that Veerappan will pack the party organisation with his own men and leave old Jayalalitha faithfuls in the cold. Says a senior leader, "The feeling of insecurity has seeped down to the district levels too. Party members worry about their futures."

The nervousness was evident soon after Veerappan's nomination as the AIADMK's joint general secretary when within days of being appointed, he began taking a firm grip on the party's affairs. On 20 July, he announced that a meeting of the AIADMK's general council would

be held in mid-August and also that elections to party posts would be held very soon. Jayalalitha loyalists believe that this could be a stratagem to take control of the party machinery. That Veerappan is planning to nominate his own men to a majority of party posts and thus call the shots by the time the next general election is held. Already, there is talk of Veerappan plotting to sideline Jayalalitha and aspiring to become the next chief minister of the state.



Veerappan and Jayalalitha: complementing each other

"I never had any quarrel with her"

R.M. Veerappan on why he joined the AIADMK under Jayalalitha

SUNDAY: While others from the AIADMK (Janaki) joined Jayalalitha soon after the Assembly elections early this year, why did you wait for so long?

R.M. Veerappan: After the split in the AIADMK and the elections which followed, I had only wanted some time before attempting unification. The cadres of both parties needed to psychologically accept such a development after having fought each other during the post-MGR period. For this reason, I decided to stay aloof while some others, including Janaki, chose to go ahead with the merger of the two

factions.

I waited for six months, during which time my followers asked me time and again what I was going to do. Then I launched a party, AIADMK (MGR) without really wanting to do that. I don't like the idea of there being so many parties in the country. Finally, I realised that the unification of the Janaki and Jayalalitha factions of the AIADMK was the real thing.

Did you ever consider joining the DMK? There was speculation to this effect.

I had never expressed a desire to join the DMK, though I did at times welcome Karunanidhi's decisions to implement the late MGR's programmes. It would be betraying MGR to extend support to Karunanidhi and his DMK. There is no truth in this rumour.

Having had heated exchanges with Jayalalitha in the past, will the two of you be able to work together?

I never had any personal quarrel with Jayalalitha. My differences with her were only with regard to MGR. She too has never treated me badly.

Moreover, 50 to 60 lakh people voted for her. So how can Veerappan



Veerappan's importance in the party's scheme of things can be gauged by the number of partymen who pour into the AIADMK's headquarters every day to greet the new leader with gifts of silk shawls. The former number two in MGR's Cabinet, however, is reluctant to admit that he is the new power centre. He says, with studied modesty, that he "bowed to the diktat of the changed times and the desire of his followers to accept the affectionate invitation extended by the general secretary (Jayalalitha) and join the party". As for the allegation that he has chief ministerial ambitions and plans to outmanoeuvre Jayalalitha, Veerappan says, "When MGR died, I had the support of 60 of the 98 MLAs who were in the Janaki camp. I could have easily staged a coup against her. But then, I never possessed the greedy ambition to grab the chief ministership."

Jayalalitha's compulsions for admitting Veerappan into the party were at least partly financial. Plagued with the problem of not having enough money to run the party (she had to even resort to

seeking deposits from aspiring candidates in the last state election), she felt that Veerappan, a wealthy film producer, could use his contacts to make the AIADMK financially healthy. Veerappan also had a good reason for wanting to get back into the AIADMK fold. Politically isolated after large numbers of his Janaki faction teamed up with Jayalalitha, he badly needed to become a part of a strong organisation to secure his political future. His entry into the party was negotiated by Jayalalitha's personal aide M. Natarajan, who succeeded in bringing Veerappan around after several rounds of talks. Veerappan was promised that he would be treated in a manner that was in keeping with his status if he joined the party.

Although many AIADMK members fear that Veerappan's induction may threaten them politically, few dispute that it will do the AIADMK a world of good. His entry has reduced fears of the AIADMK being rendered leaderless and ineffective. With Jayalalitha as the sole leader, there was always the worry that this may happen as she has talked of quitting politics more than once. Most of the party's cadres are now more optimistic about its electoral prospects.

There are some who suggest that Jayalalitha's decision to admit Veerappan—who is suspected to be sympathetic to the DMK—may be a setback for a prospective AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance. Veerappan, however, denies that he is opposed to the ruling party. "It is not true to say I am anti-Congress," he protests. "In fact, it was I who influenced MGR to support the Congress, which we knew was the only alternative to safeguard national unity and integrity." As things stand now, the Congress high command still hasn't made up its mind on whether to ally with Jayalalitha or not. While the AIADMK's recent sacrifice of a Rajya Sabha seat in favour of the Congress suggests that an alliance is likely, it is strongly opposed by the former state PCC(I) chief, G.K. Moopanar, who has told Delhi it will be suicidal to back Jayalalitha, a woman of capricious ways.

Whether an alliance with the Congress comes off or not, Veerappan is expected to use his experience and political skills to mould the AIADMK into a strong and effective party. His first task, however, will be to allay fears over his appointment to such a powerful party post. Jayalalitha too will have to find ways of reassuring her supporters that they will not be sidelined or overlooked. If they fail, it will be hard going for the beauty and the brain.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

alone not accept Jayalalitha? I have accepted the AIADMK. So naturally, I must accept the party general secretary as well.

How can you function with a leader who has threatened to quit politics and kept away from the public for long spells?

There is no need to get in touch with her for everything, for all day-to-day matters. Also, we must remember the lady has had certain personal problems, including the arthritis of the knees. But my feeling is that she is disappointed and distressed with the manner in which some of her followers had behaved and consequently must have decided that there was no use slogging for the sake of others who reaped the benefits of her toil. Anyhow, I am now confident she will become active in the party. She has already started visiting the AIADMK office often.

"I have accepted the AIADMK. So naturally, I must accept the party general secretary (Jayalalitha). She has never treated me badly"

What is your strategy to counter the DMK?

In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK is not merely an Opposition party, but also an alternative. Only 30 per cent of the electorate cast their votes in favour of the DMK, which means 70 per cent are against it. We must work to galvanise their support.

Some DMK leaders say that your party wants an alliance with the Congress(I) only to press for the dissolution of Karunanidhi's government.

If there are valid reasons for the dissolution of the DMK government, we will surely fight for it. But then, an alliance with the Congress(I) is not envisaged for this purpose. Today, only the Congress(I) and Rajiv Gandhi represent the hope for national unity and integrity; hence our desire for an alliance.

There are many of Jayalalitha's supporters who were against your induction into the party.

That is not true. Before the final plunge, I had asked S. Thirunavukarasu (AIADMK deputy leader) about the advisability of my joining the party. His reply was a spontaneous "Yes, you must come."

Slipping over spills

How maritime officials dilly-dallied in tackling an oil slick off Bombay's coast

It is sheer providence that the western coast around Bombay today has not turned into a vast environmental graveyard. On 28 June, a Maltese-registered oil tanker, *M. T. Puppy-P*, collided with a container ship, *M. V. World Quince*, 720 nautical miles from Bombay, releasing 5,500 tonnes of viscous furnace oil that soon spread into a great slick. The winds and the choppy seas only favoured the spillage. Thankfully, this was no Alaska, where the oil slick from the tanker *Exxon Valdez* contaminated 800 miles of shoreline. Only a part of the leakage—a mere two tonnes—hit Bombay's shores, but this was sufficient to cause panic.

But what was amazing was the manner in which the Bombay maritime authorities reacted to the crisis. Instead of sounding 'action stations' and rushing their resources to combat the oil slick, they were engaged in a ridiculous battle over job responsibilities. So much so that even before the Coast Guard, which is responsible for combating pollution in India's territorial waters, and other nodal agencies like the directorate general of shipping (DGS) could get their act together, *M. T. Puppy* had sailed away after disembarking 19 of its crew. They were, in fact, allowed to get away without so much as an interrogation.

As it is, the authorities were slow to react. It was only after the master of the errant ship sent out a distress signal on 29 June—a full day after the accident—that they came to know of the disaster. The distress call was picked up by Bahrain Radio and relayed to Bombay Radio, which subsequently passed on the message to the nautical adviser of the DGS, Capt. P. S. Barve, at 12.40 pm. The very same day the Indian Navy sent out a long-range aircraft to assess the extent of the damage to the ship. The pilot returned to report that though the ship appeared to be badly damaged, and had left a trail of oil in its wake, there was no cause for panic as the crew seemed to be going about their jobs. However, the pilot failed to establish contact with the master of the *M. V. World Quince* and returned to base.

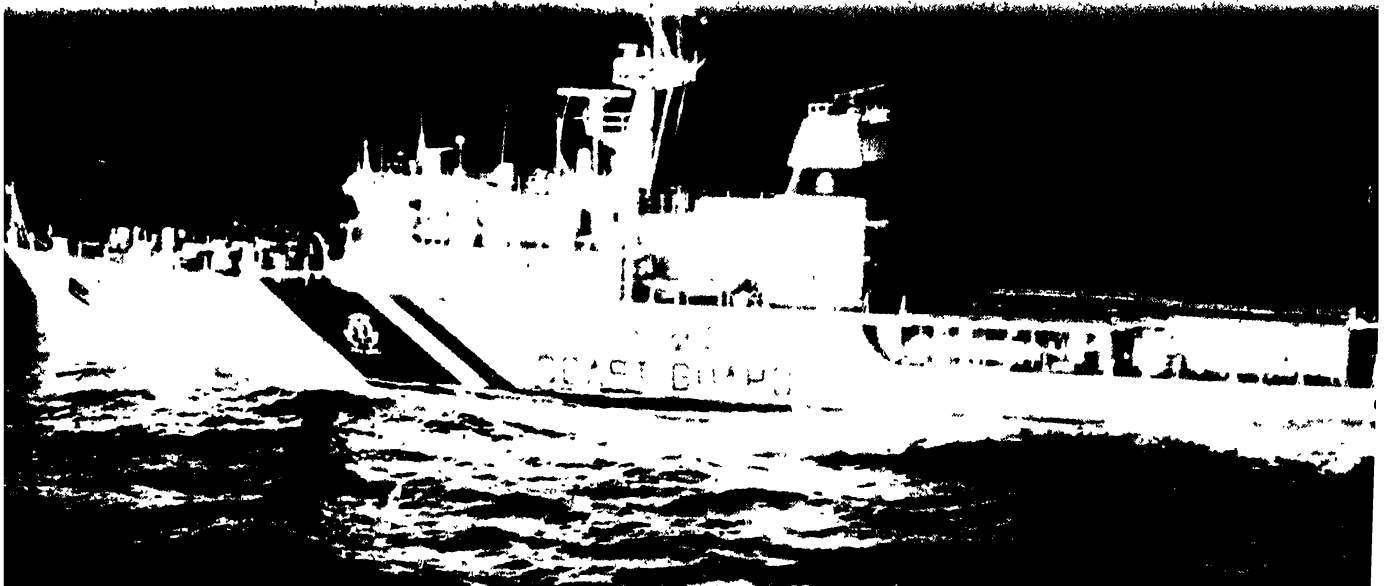
The incredible part was that the Indian authorities failed to consider the implications of the spillage. The principal officer of the mercantile marine department (POMMD), DGS, was content with sending a message to *M. T. Puppy* enquiring about the kind of assistance it required. The stricken tanker's master replied to the POMMD but omitted to mention the crucial bit about his ship leaking tonnes of pollutant oil into the sea. The master merely informed the

POMMD that a private tug, *Orinoco*, was on its way to escort his ship and that another ship, *British Renown*, had responded to his SOS call. The *Puppy* was proceeding towards Bombay and its master was unmindful of the environmental havoc that the leak was creating.

The tanker was subsequently spotted on 2 July, 48 nautical miles off the Bombay coast by a Coast Guard Dornier that was on a mission to search for an Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) oil rig employee who had fallen overboard. The Dornier pilot, however, did not appear to have noticed the leak—at any rate he did not raise an alarm.

But the Coast Guard did inform the Bombay Port Trust on 2 July about a collision at sea and requested permission for boarding the vessel and assessing the extent of the damage. The maritime authorities woke up to the environmental threat only when the Coast Guard sent a helicopter to the tanker on 3 July. The vessel was anchored 18 nautical miles off Bombay (the DGS claims that it was at its initiative that the ship had been denied entry into Bombay port as the authorities feared that the vessel could break into two and cause untold damage). A Coast Guard officer was lowered onto the deck of *Puppy*. He

The Coast Guard ship that was sent to locate the spill: the slick had probably emulsified



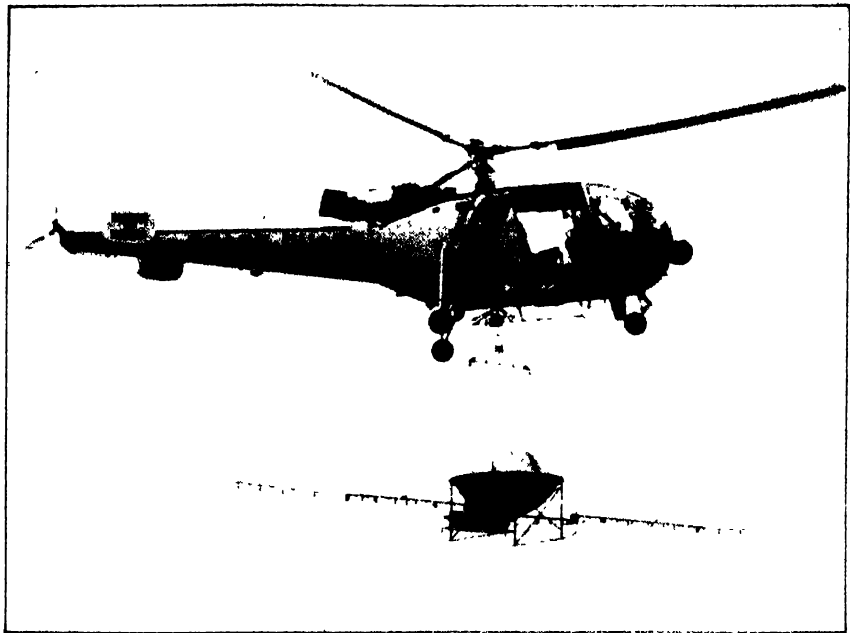
seized relevant documents pertaining to the accident and for the first time came to know just how serious the slick was: the master's log book had recorded 4,000 tonnes of spillage while experts have since concluded that a more accurate estimate would be around 5,500 tonnes. The tanker, it was now revealed, had sailed for five days towards Bombay spewing noxious furnace oil that now lay like a dirty, limitless streak across the Arabian Sea.

But even after this nobody was quite sure of what course of action to take. The Coast Guard sent a message to all the relevant agencies that the *Puppy* was leaving Bombay and suggested action against the tanker under Section 356 (j) of the Merchant Shipping Act. The Coast Guard, having fulfilled its duty, pulled back and presumed that the DGS would follow up on its advice and take the necessary steps. "If I had not collected the documents (from the tanker)," says Commodore A. K. Sharma, chief of the western regional unit of the Coast Guard, self-righteously, "the country would not have known that there was a spillage."

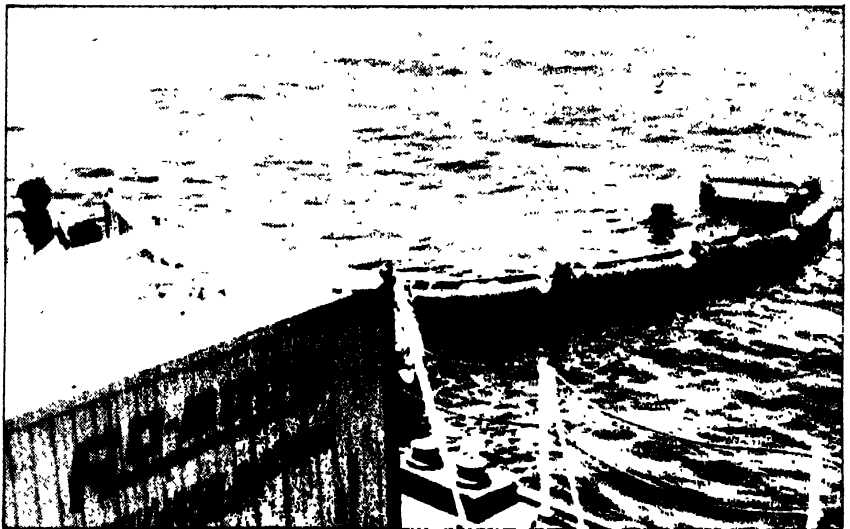
None of the relevant agencies, however, considered doing anything about the spillage. When a small portion (about two tonnes) of the leaked oil began washing ashore in the form of "tar balls" on Bombay's beaches, the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) was told to do something about it. But it was too late: a long stretch of waterfront, extending from Warden Road to Worli and covering certain parts of Bandra and Juhu, was affected by the glutinous pollutant.

It was then that the authorities realised that something should be done about locating the major part of the oil slick and taking action against the tanker *Puppy*. Thereafter began the comic denouement. *Puppy*, after it had disembarked 19 members of its crew, coolly raised anchor and slipped away, heading for Fujeira in Oman. At this point, the DGS wrote to the Coast Guard, enquiring whether any action had been taken to prevent oil pollution and asking for the address of the *Puppy*'s owner. In its own bureaucratic way, the DGS hoped it could expiate itself by serving a 'notice' to the owners of the tanker. The Coast Guard's contention is that the DGS could have taken action against the ship, were it so inclined, as the ship was within Indian waters for a long time after it set sail for Fujeira.

When the media started painting disaster scenarios and raising a hue and cry over the spillage, the government



A helicopter sprays chemical dispersants over the affected area



The 'containment booms' kept ready by the Coast Guard

The authorities were slow to react. It was only after the master of the errant ship sent out a distress signal on 29 June—a full day after the accident—that they came to know of the disaster

swung into action, though belatedly. A meeting of the regional contingency committee was convened at which representatives of the Coast Guard, DGS, Bombay Port Trust, ONGC, MPCB and the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) were present. The NIO then sent one of its survey vessels, *Gaveshani*, to locate the oil slick. It was calculated that the slick would be found approximately 420 nautical miles off the coast. But when the ship went to the spot, there was no trace of the slick. It seemed to have vanished. The Coast Guard and the Indian Navy despatched reconnaissance sorties to hunt for the spillage.

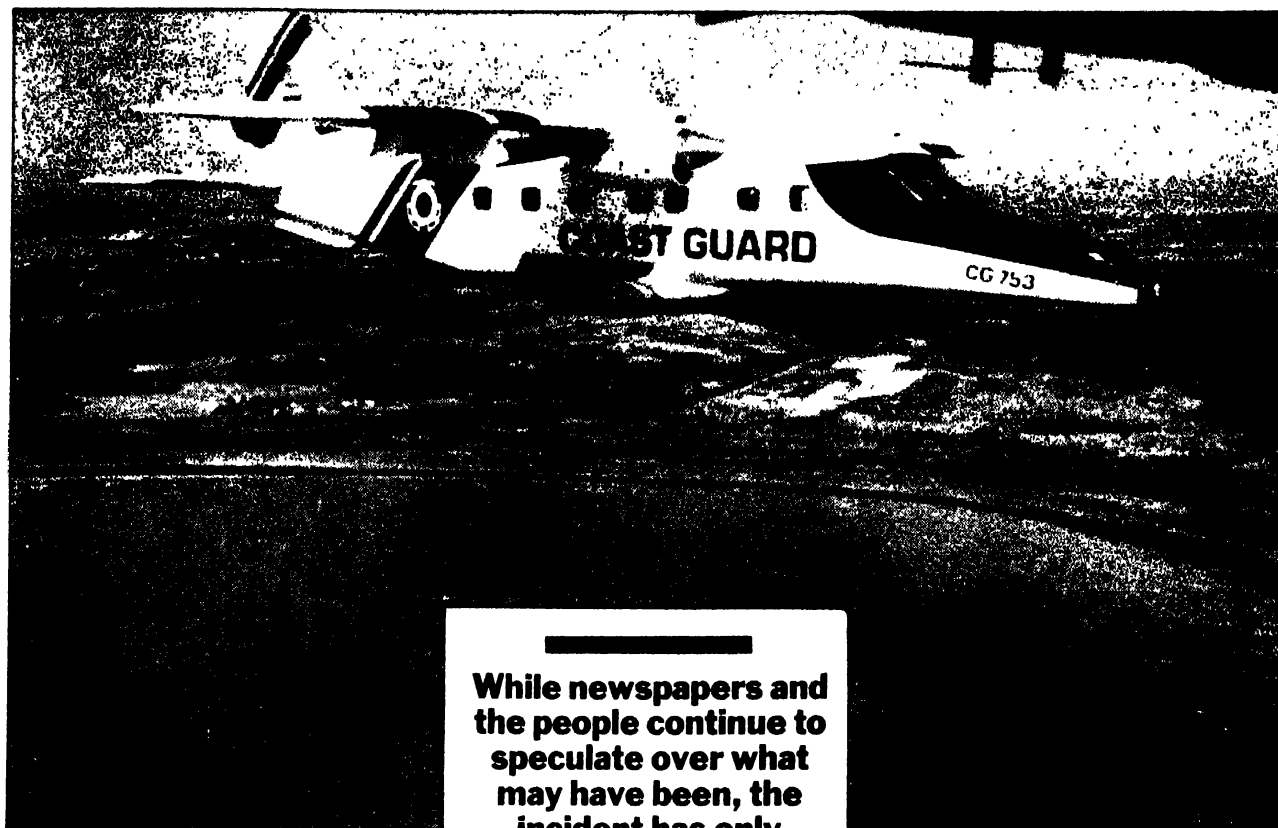
Meanwhile, the Coast Guard geared up to meet the threat if the slick showed up within 200 km of the coastline.

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While newspapers and the people continue to speculate over what may have been, the incident has only exposed the serious flaws that exist in the contingency plan drawn up by the government to tackle oil pollution

Beyond that it could not be bothered. For, the statute books said that anything beyond 200 km was outside India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and an international domain. But fortunately for the Coast Guard's not-so-eager beavers the spill could not be located.

The Coast Guard's explanation was that the slick had gone underwater. NIO experts too concurred that the oil had probably emulsified and dispersed into the water column. And fortunately for the Coast Guard and other agencies, the experts concluded that the slick would, in all probability, skip the Indian coast altogether.

The maritime authorities, however, never failed to assure that they were prepared to face any eventuality—lest they be accused of shirking their responsibility. The ONGC offered the Coast Guard all the requisite equipment to fight the slick in case it showed up. Among these were the containment booms that come in handy for 'mechanical recovery' of the oil. However, this is possible only if the slick is less than 24 hours old, as the boom drags the oily film closer to the vessel to which it is attached and a skimmer is used to scoop it up and deposit it in a tanker. But with the water column acting on the oil slick, the film thins out over a larger expanse, necessitating the use of chemical dispersants. These help to break the oil into

smaller particles and manageable patches. And if the oil is washed up on the shores, detergents are used for the clean-up process.

Here too, however, the MPCB (which is responsible for controlling pollution within a five km range from the Bombay shores) has failed to discharge its duties adequately. Citing financial constraint and inadequate facilities as reasons, the Board's chairman, C. D. Oommachen, requested the Coast Guard to clean up the beaches. This was done by the Coast Guard, first by spraying chemical dispersants on the coastline from helicopters fitted with sprays. And later, the job of physically cleaning up the oil patches on the shores was taken up with the help of the Bombay Municipal Corporation and fire brigade personnel.

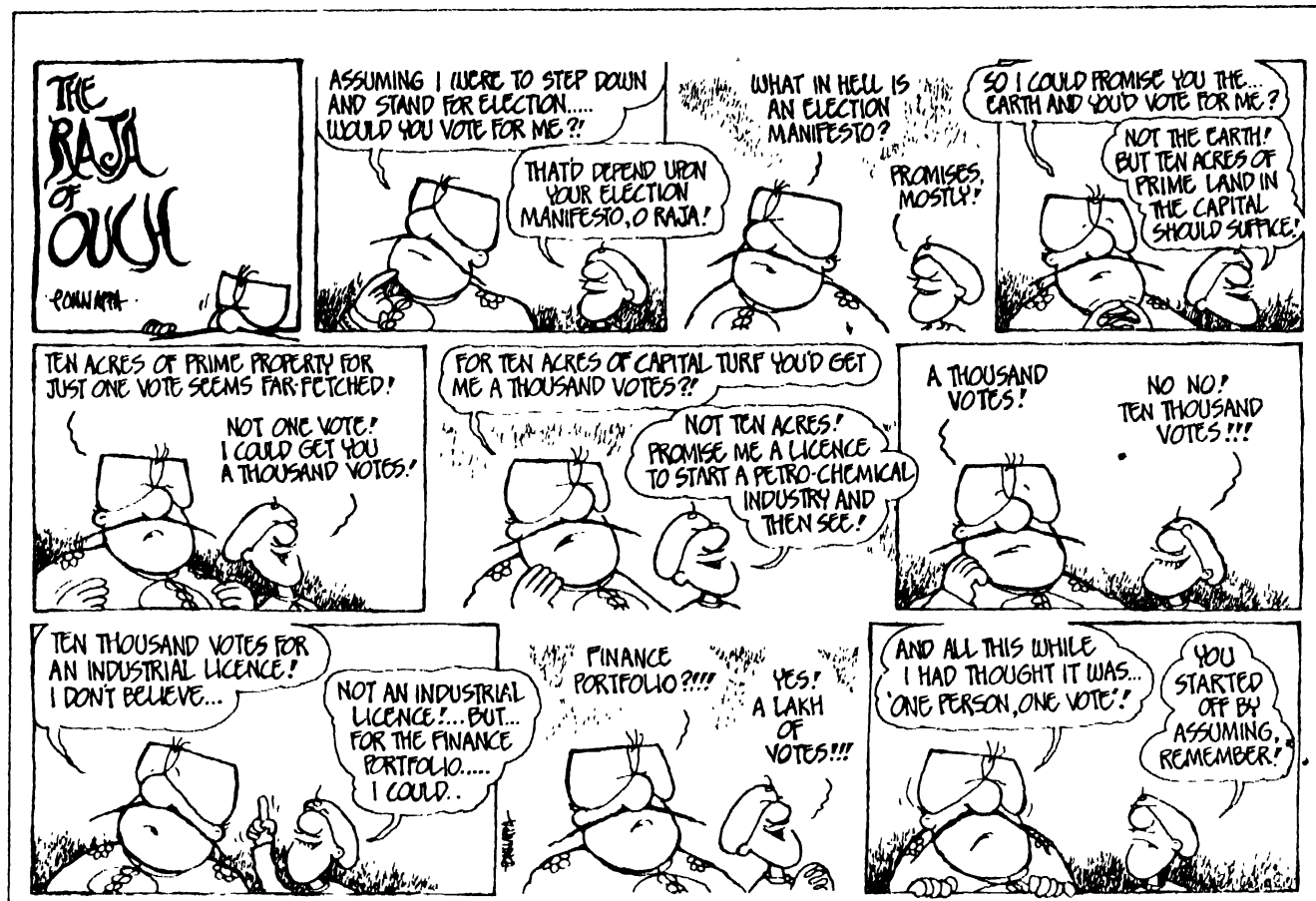
There is no doubt, however, that the maritime authorities have had a lucky

The Dornier aircraft that was sent by the Coast Guard to locate the oil spill

escape. As a scientific officer of the NIO pointed out, "Compared to the slicks that have occurred elsewhere, this was of a much smaller magnitude," adding that if the major portion of the oil spill had occurred nearer the shores, it would have had a lasting impact on the marine life and fisheries in the region. The data collected by the NIO vessel will no doubt help scientists to assess the damage caused by the spill on the organisms and various types of planktons that exist close to the shoreline.

While newspapers and the people continue to speculate over what may have been, the incident has only exposed the serious flaws that exist in the contingency plan drawn up by the government to tackle oil pollution. Not only did the agencies vested with the authority to control pollution fail to locate the spill but also let the errant ship get away. The government, of course, has declared that it will sue the owners of the vessel and the Coast Guard's Commodore Sharma insists that they have enough proof for the government to claim civil liability. But the fact remains that in their first encounter with an oil slick, the Indian authorities and experts have only impressed one and all with a thoroughly ham-handed performance.

Aditi Chatterjee / Bombay



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Two PMs, one strategy



Both Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto have adopted populist schemes to undermine the Opposition

KULDIP NAYAR

The Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers have quite a few things in common. One of them is their attempt to undermine Opposition-ruled states or provinces by introducing populist schemes. Rajiv Gandhi has the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, which is a device to give the *panchayats* a largesse of Rs 280 crores to generate employment directly without the state governments coming into the picture. Benazir Bhutto has introduced a similar scheme—the People's Works Programme—worth Rs 200 crores, which is controlled by the federal government.

But Benazir's scheme is not without criticism. Pakistan's Punjab, which is under the Islamic Jamhooree Ittehad (JI) or the Islamic Democratic Alliance—opposed to Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP)—and Baluchistan have argued, though, in vain, that the People's Works Programme will impinge on provincial autonomy.

The Opposition in Pakistan finds itself in the same predicament as its counterpart in India. Any objection, however valid, is construed as an attempt to obstruct people's welfare. Analysts in Pakistan feel that the programme is bound to affect the "patronage structure" of the provincial government.

There is no doubt that Rajiv Gandhi expects to garner the support of those who benefit from the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and their families in the next election. This is as good as the Congress(I) buying votes with money drawn from the public exchequer, but propriety has never been Rajiv Gandhi's strong point.

COMPARED TO the Congress(I), the PPP has an advantage. Since the JI is a conglomeration of varied interest groups rather than a coherent political party, Benazir's move to associate elected representatives with the people's programme may entice members from the

Opposition. But some newspapers in Pakistan have seen through the game and have criticised her government.

As the *Herald*, an influential monthly from Karachi, points out: "The People's Works Programme is bound to affect the patronage structure of the provincial government and this, the PPP hopes, will have explosive results, for the JI." (Punjab, 67 per cent of Pakistan in terms of population, is being ruled by chief minister Nawaz Sharif of the JI.)

Since the PPP does not have a clear majority in the upper house, the Senate, some resolutions not palatable to the party get through. For example, the House has passed a resolution to impress upon the government the need to convene a meeting of the Council of Common Interests (CCI), which is akin to our National Integration Council (NIC).

But it is up to Benazir Bhutto to convene the meeting if and when she likes. In the same way, there is no compulsion on Rajiv Gandhi to call an NIC meeting. Past experience shows that both Prime Ministers tend to use such forums for party and personal interests. They rave and rant at Opposition parties who, if they make any protest, are characterised as "uncooperative" and given a lecture on the rudiments of democracy.

RAJIV GANDHI is a step ahead of Benazir Bhutto because of his overwhelming majority in the Lok Sabha compared to her shaky numerical strength. Consequently, he has been intemperate. To the credit of Benazir, she has never called the Opposition parties unpatriotic, history-sheeters or foreign agents as Rajiv Gandhi has. In this respect, she is quite unlike her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who reserved the choicest abuse for his opponents. The need for decorum did not restrain his tongue even at a forum where it was expected. Once, when the Indian

representatives withdrew from a UN Security Council meeting on Kashmir, in protest against his rude observations, he said: "The Indian dogs have run away."

Benazir Bhutto may also share Rajiv Gandhi's view on the Prime Minister's relationship with the President. The Pakistani President has more powers than the Indian President. As the late Zia-ul Haq showed a few months before his death, the Pakistani President can dismiss the Prime Minister and dissolve the National Assembly. In fact Mohammed Khan Junejo was the victim of Zia's wrath.

Our President cannot dismiss the Prime Minister so long as he

enjoys a majority in the Lok Sabha. At best, the President can ask him to seek a fresh vote of confidence.

Like the Giani, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the Pakistani President, loves to meet politicians of all hues. Fearing that Ishaq Khan may be influenced by Opposition leaders, the Benazir Bhutto government had a news item planted in some Pakistani newspapers that the "President cannot meet politicians". The item did not carry the source. But the meaning was clear.

Ishaq Khan felt so agitated over the news item that the Benazir government had to order an inquiry "to get to the bottom of the matter". As was to be expected, nothing came out of the inquiry. ■



It goes to Benazir's credit that she has never called the Opposition parties unpatriotic

Lucky escape

● For once acerbic political commentator Cho Ramaswamy was on the receiving end. Only his detractors weren't trying to wound him with poisonous jibes. Their weapons were far more dangerous—sandbags, soda bottles, acid bulbs.

And they picked a public meeting in Madurai to launch their attack. Cho was at the podium staunchly advocating the continued presence of the IPKF in Sri Lanka, when a jeepful of miscreants drew up outside the rally ground. Shouting slogans, they threw their missiles at the dias, injuring ten people among the audience.



Cho Ramaswamy: none the worse

Cho, however, escaped unhurt.

Game to a fault, he continued from where he'd left off. Though only after a little aside: "I addressed public

meetings during the AIADMK rule, but no such incidents occurred then. This is the second time during this present regime that my meeting is being disturbed."

Desperately seeking Protima

● She may seem to have abdicated in favour of one-better daughter Pooja, but ageing sex symbol Protima Bedi still has what it takes.

Witness her success with Nritya Gram—her dance school which will, for starters, teach Odissi, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi, Chhau and Kalarippetu; graduating to Kathakali, Manipuri, Bharatnatyam and Kathak.

The school is located on ten acres of land near Bangalore, donated to Bedi by the well-known patron of arts Ramakrishna Hegde. And Protima's luscious charms recognise no boundaries—political or any other—either. For, who do you think is all set to inaugurate Nritya Gram? None other than Prime Minister Gandhi.

There's just one catch that may well ruin this cheerful scenario. With good friend Hegde out of power, the state government has been less than forthcoming with the funds.

So, desperately seeking Protima may have to look for patrons rather than publicity.

Getting shirty

● Guess which player paid up the second-highest fine at Wimbledon this year? Tim Mayotte? John McEnroe?

Wrong on both counts. It was our very own Zeeshan Ali, the epitome of propriety on court. It happened like this. As soon as Ali's first round match against Wally Masur got over, the Men's Tennis Council (MTC) supervisor came up to Zeeshan to inform him that he would have to pay a fine. The commercial logo on his shirt was, apparently, larger than the permissible two-inch square.

"No way," fumes Ali, now back in

India. "The logo was in no way bigger than what was allowed." And anyway, the supervisor had seen him warming up before the match. Surely the reasonable thing to have done was to

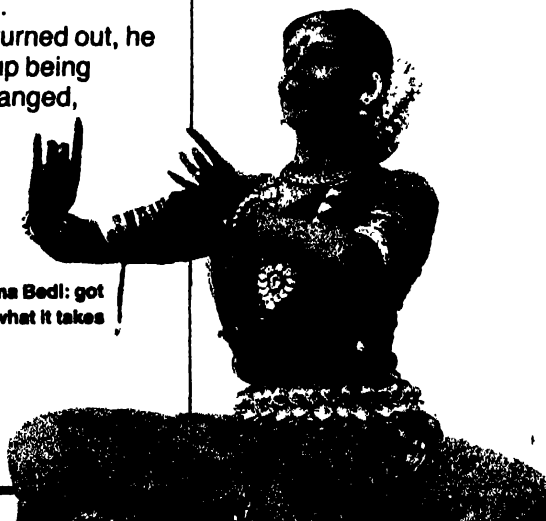
warn him. Even the umpire didn't bring this to Zeeshan's notice. "I would have been quite willing to change my shirt," says Ali.

As it turned out, he ended up being shortchanged, instead.

Zeeshan Ali: done in?



Protima Bedi: got what it takes



Setting the Seine ablaze

● He journeyed down the Ganga to produce a book. But it was the Seine that Vijay Singh set on fire with *Jaya Ganga*.

The book was released by Penguin India a fortnight back, to rave reviews. And Vijay Singh, a



Vijay Singh: flattering comparisons

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student, who made it big in intellectual circles in Paris, came in for flattering comparisons with Andre Breton. Critics also maintained that he brought Umberto Eco to mind with his "baroque effervescence".

Singh, however, is much more thrilled about the Indian release. "It feels great to know that my friends will now be able to read my book," he enthuses. "Writing in many ways is a suicidal act and it was my friends who sustained me through it."



Urmila Gupta: in exalted company

Destination Venice

● Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Adoor Gopalakrishnan. And now Urmila Gupta.

The attractive director of the Film Festivals Directorate finds herself in exalted company as she becomes only the fourth Indian to grace the jury at the Venice Film Festival, to be held this September.

Gupta, whose ubiquitous presence at the Delhi Festival added some glamour to an otherwise drab affair, came in for congratulation from Satyajit Ray.

Said an elated Gupta: "I think the nationality of films is getting more and more blurred. And to be on the jury of such a festival as Venice gives me an opportunity to monitor it—at close quarters."

Sharpshooter Rahul

● The BJP's campaign notwithstanding, Rahul Gandhi made it, after all. To college, that is.

On the morning of 17

July, the sharpshooter of the Gandhi clan drove up to the front gates of St Stephen's College, in a bullet-proof white

Rahul Gandhi with (from left) mother Sonia and sister Priyanka



Ambassador, accompanied by the now-obligatory Black Cats. To be greeted by banners and posters welcoming him to the venerable institution, while members of the Indian National Forum distributed pamphlets which read: "Don't worry Rahul, we are with you."

Having shot his way into college, Rahul is now deep into academics. On his first day in St Stephen's, he spent three whole hours on the college campus. Which, by the Gandhis' standards, is pretty good going.

Stellar ceiling

The Film Producers Combine (FPC) debars filmmakers from signing on stars who have more than twelve assignments on hand

It was a formula that never failed: sign the reigning superstar and be assured of your millions. And with producers in hot pursuit, it wasn't long before the price tags for the most sought-after film stars crossed the six-figure mark. Result: today, 39 film stars are working on more than 12 films simultaneously and some have as many as 40 assignments on hand.

Not surprisingly, producers began feeling the strain. And predictably, they were at the mercy of their own monstrous creation: the star syndrome. To add to their misery, the producers discovered that the magic formula no

longer worked. What was once considered blasphemous was actually happening: the superstar was no longer the producer's ticket to success.

At long last, the Film Producers' Combine (FPC)—a "high-powered committee of the producers' associations of western India"—has woken up to the problem. And in, what is being branded a "revolutionary resolution", instructed all its members to refrain from signing any of the 39 "busy artistes" (among them Sunny Deol, Sridevi, Kimi Katkar, Sonam) listed by it for their new ventures. The resolution was brought into effect on 10 July listing all those who currently have more than 12 assignments on hand. As G.P. Sippy, eminent producer and president of the Film Federation of India, says: "We have reached the point of no return. If we have to remove some of the chaos that now reigns in the industry, it is necessary to enforce some discipline."

Among the reasons cited by the FPC to justify its getting tough are, spiralling costs of production, the mounting losses incurred by producers because of multiple assignments of film stars, as well as

dance directors, fight masters and others. "It's not just the stars," says Sippy. "Today even dance directors are studio hopping and working on as many as five sets in a day. Or a movie may be held up because a fight master does not have the time and all this only contributes to the heavy losses." Concur Sridevi, who now has 12 films on hand—and whose name features in the FPC resolution: "I am willing to adjust to the new rule and would, in fact, prefer to work one shift a day. But very often I am forced to do more shifts as I have to alter my schedules with those of my co-stars or the dance directors."

According to M.P. Jain, the producer of *Red Rose* and *Gehra Zakhm*, who is now in the midst of his third film *Nakabandi* (starring Sridevi, Dharmendra, Chunky Pandey and Sonam, all of whom are "listed" by the FPC). "If all the artistes give their call-sheets for the entire film, there would be no problem at

all." Jain, in fact, made sure that he obtained commitments from all the stars before he started shooting for his film in April 1988. "So far I have had no problems with any of these stars because I got all their dates right from the beginning." The problem, in Jain's opinion, arises, when producers plunge into a project without planning. "Most producers usually sign up the stars first and then start looking for a plot and then work on the script, screenplay, etc.," says Jain.

Tarachand Barjatya of Rajshri Productions, however, differs with Jain. He feels that filmmakers today simply lack the talent and commitment to make good films. "In the olden days, there were filmmakers like Mehboob, Bimal Roy, P.C. Barua, Devki Bose, V. Shantaram who created classics. Today, a film may be technically excellent but it does not have a soul." These filmmakers, say Barjatya, have been replaced by a brash new breed of producers who have made their millions elsewhere—in the construction business or in diamond exports—and have entered the film industry for a lark. "Can you then blame the



G.P. Sippy says:
"We have reached the point of no return. If we have to remove the chaos in the industry, it is necessary to enforce discipline"

PHAL S. GHOTIA



Dharmendra:
troublesome star

filmstar who probably quotes an astronomical sum to discourage this kind of producer?" asks Barjatya.

So, what's the solution? One way to beat the system would be to make films with lesser names. As Barjatya has done, and in the process introduced many an unknown face who has gone on to become a superstar. Probably, the most striking example is that of Jaya Bhaduri who was launched in *Uphaar*. "We signed her for Rs 10,000 for *Uphaar*," recalls Barjatya, "and in the very next film, *Piya Ka Ghar*, which we had started even before *Uphaar* was completed, we were paying her Rs 50,000."

But most producers prefer taking the easy way out, by signing on the established stars rather than take the risk of launching a new face. Chunky Pandey is a favourite with the producers today. Admits Pandey, "I have a lot of films on hand but I keep saying that I have only 12 good films." So why sign the others? He retorts, "I was forced to." The lure of the lucre, perhaps?

Producers are also to blame for the trouble they find themselves in, giving stars too much leeway, as they do. Says Taran Adarsh, executive editor of *Trade Guide*: "Dharmendra is a notorious trouble-maker and all the producers are cursing him because he does not come to the sets on time. But let one of his films hit the jackpot and the very same producers who are now vowing never to sign him, will go rushing back."

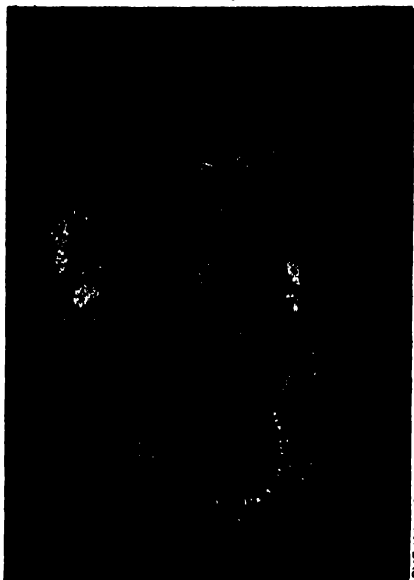
Adarsh is also sceptical about the FPC resolution having any effect. "These stars are worshipped by the producers like gods. And though now they might all hail this new resolution, I can say without a doubt that when it comes to their own films they will go to these very artistes and claim that they had never supported the resolution."

Others are less sceptical. Says Gulshan Rai, a revered name in production and distribution circles, "Some producers are bound to feel the pinch. But they all realise that it is in their interest to make it work." Besides, Rai feels that if the artistes themselves voluntarily cut down on the number of films they would be able to put in better performances.

Agrees Sunny Deol, another of the "busy artistes": "An actor doesn't need more than five or six films," and adds quickly, "I don't know why my name has been included in this list. Anyway, I'm already thinking of working just one shift, come November." He also feels that then the actors "would start enjoying their work instead of just rushing around from one set to another." And



Sonam: on the dreaded list



Kimi and Chunky: too many films on hand

Says Sridevi, whose name features in the FPC resolution: "I am willing to adjust to the new rule and would in fact prefer to work one shift a day. But very often I am forced to do more shifts"



since money seems to be the motivating factor in the film industry today, Deol suggests wryly: "Perhaps the producers could say, 'Look, we'll give you so much more if you work just one shift', and then maybe it would work."

The FPC is already contemplating slapping on another resolution. "From 23 September onwards, there will be only one shift a day," declares Sippy. The veteran producer is well aware of the fact that "a section of producers" is not exactly ecstatic about the stringent resolution. But there's little danger of revolt in the ranks, for, "disciplinary action against a defaulting member" may include "suspension or even expulsion from the membership of the concerned trade body and suspension of the shoot-

ings/recordings of the film concerned". As one industry insider elaborates: "If a producer is expelled by any of the associations of which he is a member, he would be ruined. He would not be able to avail of raw stock, or make prints of his film or even sell it to a distributor." But, ultimately, the success or the failure of the resolution depends on "the willingness of the producers to put in a united effort and bring back some kind of order in the system," says Jain.

Till then, the stars will continue to rule the roost. And producers will still queue outside their bungalows, signing amounts in hand, a hope in their hearts—that the presence of a 'superstar' would bring them home and dry.

Adite Chatterjee/Bombay

Genius at play

Renowned filmmaker Goutam Ghose's documentary on shehnai maestro Bismillah Khan captures the essence of the musician's personality

Banaras. 1989. A group of young boys clad in white kurta pyjamas sit in awed silence while their guru plays the shehnai. As its sweet sounds waft through the room, the audience sits spellbound. Oblivious of the camera and the burning lights, Ustad Bismillah Khan plays on.

"Cut," yells Goutam Ghose, breaking the spell, but freezing the moment in celluloid. The raga's compelling lyricism fades away as an excited murmur rises from the audience. A little self-conscious, Bismillah Khan turns to Goutam Ghose, wanting to know if the take was okay. "Great, just great," comes the reply.

For ten days, Bismillah Khan's crumbling house, overlooking a congested Banaras bylane, was overrun by the celluloid brigade shooting the first of a series of documentaries, co-produced by National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and Sangeet Natak Akademi, and directed by Goutam Ghose.

The film, titled *Bismillah Khan*, says co-scriptwriter Ain Rasheed Khan is about "the phenomenon called Bismillah Khan", who came to Banaras at the age of four, and moved into the house of another *shehnai* player (where he still lives). "He was a hen-pecked Ustad," recalls Bismillah. "He only played when there was no food at home." The film revolves around Bismillah's memories, which include walking around Dalmandi, Banaras' red light area, as a boy. "I remember strolling around, my head in the clouds as I heard the voices of the various *bajjis* singing." Parts of the film

were also shot at the Balaji Temple in Banaras. Says Khan: "Every artist has a source of inspiration. The Nahabat Khana (a tiny room overlooking the Ganga) is mine." This is where he received his first lessons. And this is where Lala Ali Bux, his guru and uncle played for 18 years.

Though Bismillah's birthplace is Dumran, near Bhojpur in Bihar, his love for Banaras is only surpassed by his love for music. When an unusually wealthy American offered him millions of dollars

to settle in the United States, Bismillah refused. He would accept only if the American could also buy up the temples, *ghats*, *sadhus* and the Ganga flowing through Banaras and transport it to the States. "When I go abroad, I leave my heart in Hindustan. And when I am visiting parts of India, I leave my heart in Banaras." An artist should never leave his roots, believes Khan, as his life and

art can flourish only in his own environment.

Calcutta, is the other city close to his heart. "I began my career as a recording artiste in Calcutta. So Calcutta will always be dear to me." Holder of a few honorary doctorates, besides the Padma Bhushan (1968), the Padma Vibushan (1980) and the Tansen Award, Bismillah does not care about meaningless things like numbers. He doesn't remember how many records he has to his credit and such trivia. It is with music that he has threaded his life together. "Music answers the questions of life..." Even a wrestling match where a lanky



Bismillah Khan in concert: humble to a fault

pehelwan pounds his burly rival into mincemeat has a musical counterpoint, he feels. "It is the same way with us, for musicians are always working to outshine each other."

No great fan of cinema (his mother forbade him to see films when he was a young boy) he is unhappy with the previous documentaries on him, including one by an American film company. "But Goutam Ghose's film has captured my heart," he says. "This film is different. You know, when all these people are working together, they are creating music. I find music in their work. It is as if they are all working together on a musical composition, each one helping to create a totality."

For his part, Bismillah Khan has totally dedicated himself to ensuring the success of the film. "Don't worry about me. Concentrate on the film. The work has to be good," he tells unit members between retakes.

The film which will juxtapose shots of Bismillah Khan playing the *shehnai*, with shots of him talking about his life with Banaras as the background, promises to be an intriguing cinematic portrait.

Why did Goutam Ghose choose to make a documentary on Bismillah Khan? "Bismillah is an outstanding personality as well as an outstanding musi-



Goutam Ghose directing Bismillah Khan on the sets of his film



RAJAN GHOSE



RAJAN GHOSE

cian. He is one of the few classical musicians of that *gharana* who is still active. They don't make people like Bismillah anymore."

Even though his best known work is *Paar*, a feature film, says Ghose: "I started as a documentary filmmaker. And I like returning to documentaries whenever I can. Very few documentaries are made on personalities by filmmakers. Ray has made a few...Benegal has made one on Ray."

A filmmaker, Ghose believes, is even more inspired when he is working with great artists of another discipline. "If I can capture the work of a great artist in my medium, it can be exciting and educative...one learns from a person like Bismillah Khan." Ghose, who composes the music for his own films, is fascinated by Bismillah. "I have always wanted to do a documentary on the great musician Bismillah, because I've admired him for many years."

And there's much to admire about the maestro. Humble to a fault and strangely



KALYAN CHAKRABARTY

Says Goutam Ghose:
"If I can capture the
work of a great artist
in my medium, it can
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unaffected by adulation from both ordinary fan or famed filmmaker, Bismillah Khan, remains modest and faithful to old friends. Accosted by an old acquaintance while waiting for the camera crew to get ready at the Balaji Mandir, Bismillah hugs him and talks about the days when they played marbles in the *galis* of Banaras.

While Bismillah swaps stories with his old friend, the lights burn and the camera crew frets, Goutam Ghose, award winning director of *Paar* and *Antarjali Jatra* waits patiently, a cigarette at his lips. Genus, he feels, makes its own rules.

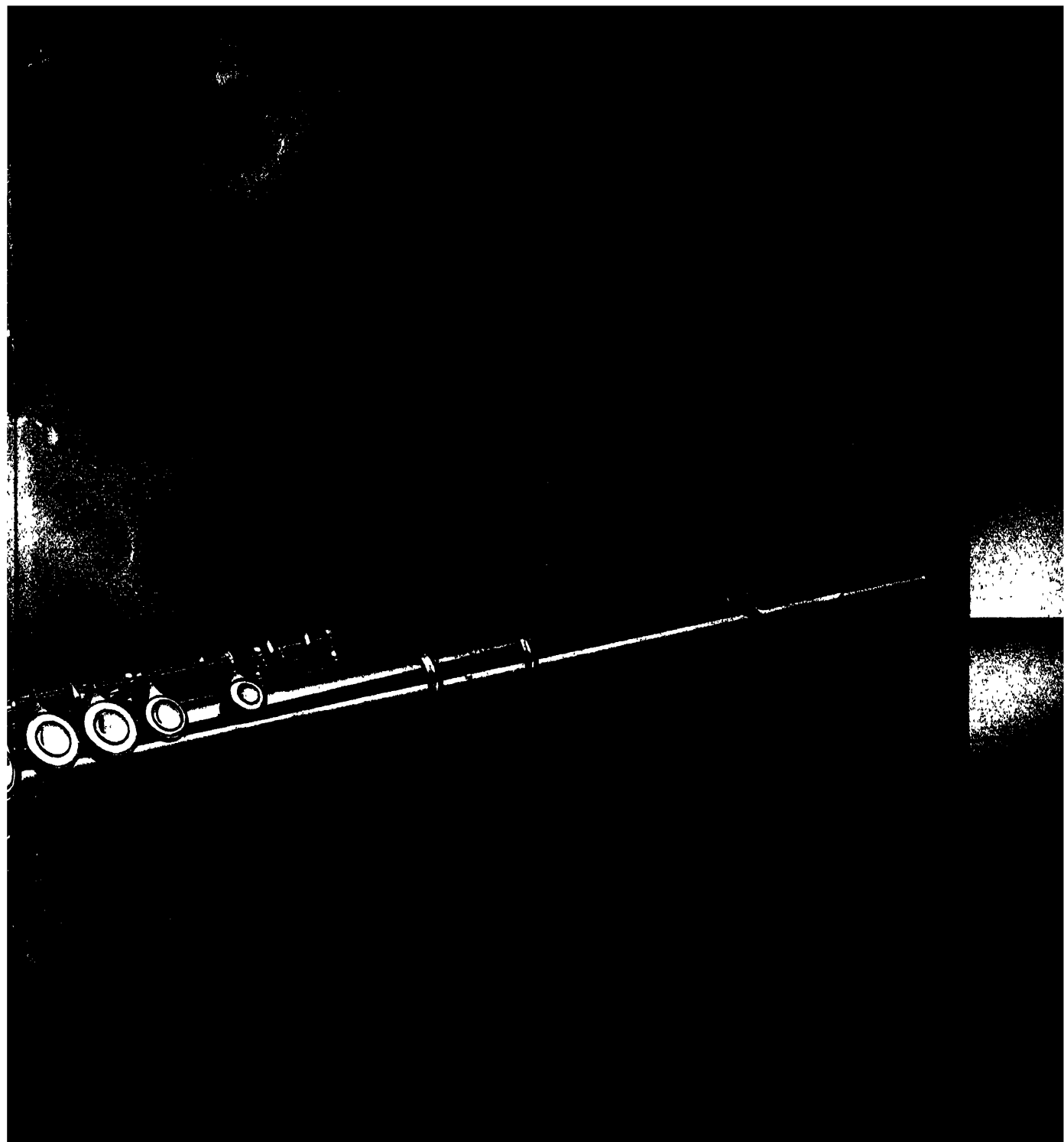
Sanjeet Chowdhury/Banaras

**The
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the Westwind.**

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The 'sarson' saga

It's Doordarshan's latest obsession, with prime time being reserved for serials set in Punjab, which seek to promote Hindu-Sikh amity

Doordarshan's Punjabi programmes relay a message that is loud and clear, even if it's not always convincing. That things are not as bad in that strife-torn state as the newspapers make out; that large doses of optimism can do a lot to allay fears. And *Choli Daman*, *Sanjha Chulha*, *Tapish* signal only the beginning of the Punjabi blitzkrieg. Over the next two and a half years, the prime-time slot after the English news is largely booked for what are appropriately called Punjabi sagas. A Rs 22-crore budget has been allocated by Doordarshan to produce 50 programmes—telefilms, serials and documentaries—on Punjab and thus ensure that the

(From left) Joyshree Arora in a scene from *Dil Dariya*: Hindu-Sikh amity on display in the serial; a scene from *Choli Daman*: promoting peaceful co-existence

slot never goes empty. And like all other idiot box fare, this is a motley combination of the good, the bad and the ugly.

Two years ago, Mandi House mandarins, in conjunction with the home ministry and the Prime Minister's office decided to provide 'a platform' on television for those who wanted to fight terrorism. Writers, directors, and theatre personalities from Punjab were invited for a meeting with minister of state for home, P. Chidambaram, in February 1987, so that a comprehensive programming policy could be drawn up. Says Albel Singh Grewal, deputy director-general, Doordarshan: "Creative artists are afraid of terrorists and afraid of speaking against fundamentalism at a time like this, but Doordarshan was willing to give them a platform."

As part of Mandi House policy, 15 serials, 31 telefilms and four documentaries have already been cleared, some of these already telecast, while others are to be shown shortly. The announcement of the government decision to screen more programmes on Punjab have opened the floodgates for producers, writers and directors. As one director-writer put it: "Every *dho-ban*, *nai*, and *kumhar* (washerwoman, barber and potter) have started making

programmes on Punjab, and there is not enough careful screening to keep out mediocre offerings."

The government's intentions cannot be faulted, though. "Television, it felt, might help where the law was fighting a losing battle. Also, some sort of domestic programming was required to counter the influence of Pakistani television, which is easily picked up by television sets in the state. Hindu-Sikh amity had to be restored and promoted in a state where the two communities had co-existed for centuries. "By educating people and restoring their confidence, we would slowly be able to fight separatist forces," claims Grewal. "We also wanted to reach audiences outside Punjab to show that Sikhs at large are not contributing to the violence, and that retaliation will only strengthen the hands of the terrorists. We also wanted to show that there is more to Punjab than bomb-blasts and bus massacres."

The first of these 'Punjabi sagas' was *Choli Daman*, on the Sikh-boy-loves-Hindu-girl theme. Written by the well-known Punjabi writer Kartar Singh Duggal, and directed by M.S. Sathya, the 13-episode serial "is a bold attempt at projecting the sensitive Punjab prob-





lem in its perspective," according to its producer. Except for the story-line, and the setting, however, there is little that separates it from other television soap. A Sikh and Hindu family who were neighbours in Pakistan, continue to live close to each other after migrating to India. Joginder (Mandip Singh) who is training to be a doctor falls in love with the Hindu girl next door, Roshni (Nisha Singh). As communal tensions grow, the neighbourliness of the two families dissolves, until Roshni is forbidden to meet Joginder, leave alone marry him. In a sub-plot, Joginder's Hindu friend falls in love with a Sikh girl—both couples, of course, eventually marry, and live happily ever after.

Kuckoo Mathur, who produced the serial for Doordarshan, has no special commitment to the Punjab cause. "I was told they wanted a serial on Punjab, so we made one," she says.

For Balwant Gargi, who wrote and directed *Sanjha Chulha* it was different, though. "Through the national network, I have projected Punjab all over India, deep down to the south," he says enthusiastically. But surely there was more to it than familiarising "southerners" with Punjabi culture. "As a concept, *sanjha chulha*, the community kitchen, inspired me," says Gargi. "The power of women in homes also attracted me. Women have preserved Punjab's traditions in their rituals, ceremonials and in the earthy and basic language they speak. In my serial, which is structured around the *sanjha chulha*, there is a character who says, 'When women fight, it is like cutting water with a sword. It does not stay separated long. But when

Mand House, in conjunction with the home ministry and the Prime Minister's office, decided to provide a 'platform' on television for those who wanted to fight terrorism. Television, it was felt, might help where the law was fighting a losing battle.

men raise their swords, it leads to catastrophe.' This is why the women in the serial are so crucial to it."

Did Gargi, then, go into it with a message? With the intent to foster communal harmony? "I hate messages," announces the writer-filmmaker. "Messages are very boring. Yet the message is so transparent, almost like a slogan, for the harmony and friendship of the two communities. I come from a village in Punjab and have often visited Bhatinda during the recent years of turmoil. And I am amazed to find deep communal harmony in the communities even today."

Perhaps that explains why Gargi could not resist the happy ending. The two families re-unite and the *sanjha chulha* is rekindled with friendship and bonhomie.

"My main concern was to create a pleasant and entertaining programme for the viewers. I have tried to enliven the structure by adding comic situations, juicy dialogues, and songs sung by Pakistani singer Reshma. I leave lofty ideals to the politicians and cultural leaders. They frighten me," he says.

The Thursday night offering, *Dil Dariya*, claims to be "daringly different" from the others. Not really. Once again, two families, one Sikh, the other Hindu, are cast asunder by the Partition, only to suffer bitterly as a consequence, until they reunite. Mohan Singh, a prosperous cloth merchant, and Om Prakash, a petty shopkeeper, are the best of friends, with the venerable and rich Sardar being the father figure for both families. It is impossible to differentiate one family from the other, until the political situation separates them. Om Prakash feels that Mohan Singh has deprived him of his grandson. Actually the boy has been lost in mob violence. A confrontation results, though, as with most Punjab serials, things end happily, with the boy being miraculously restored to his family. "We have written the story after carefully studying the pulse of the television viewers," claims Dalip Singh, the writer.

"The first few episodes of *Dil Dariya* have been enthusiastically received, and have left audiences countrywide begging for more," boasts Rajneesh Sahani, the producer of Synox Video Vision. Doordarshan officials agree that preliminary feedback has shown that *Dil Dariya* is likely to be the most popular Punjab serial yet. Director Lekh Tandon has used the simple story-line effectively, packing in just the right amount of emotion and drama to keep viewers glued to their sets.

Not all such programmes are sweet and syrupy, however. Lalit and Navnindra Behl's telefilm *Tapish* raises harsh and relevant questions about life in Punjab. A far cry from the cliched images of the troubled state that television audiences are exposed to, *Tapish* "tries to capture authentic images in the crisis-torn lives of its people, without recourse to stereotypes, but with meaning and purpose". Navnindra, who is head of the department of theatre and television at the Punjabi University in Patiala, explains that both she and Lalit are deeply rooted in the Punjab and its culture. "When we submitted proposals for a couple of projects, we knew that we would not be permitted to tackle issues directly related to the terrorist problem," she explains.





Says Balwant Gargi: "As a concept, the sanjha chulha, the community kitchen, inspired me. As did the power of women within the house"



(From top) A scene from *Tapish*: hard-hitting; Rama Vij and director Balwant Gargi on the sets of *Sanjha Chulha*

Instead, *Tapish* is the tragedy of an old man, Santa Singh, who seeks to come to terms with the loss of his two sons. Once a young, idealistic freedom fighter, Singh is on the verge of insanity as he grapples with the sudden disappearance of his college-going younger son, while the elder, a police officer, is killed in an encounter with people believed responsible for the younger brother's fate.

"We have presented a down-to-earth picture of Punjab, what the land and her people are like, their emotional crises and entanglements, as they come to terms with the Punjab problem," says Navnindra. It is not unusual to find families whose 'missing' sons have turned terrorists in Punjab today. The film ends with the young boy returning to his town, but watching it from a distance. The audience is kept guessing as to whether he actually resumes family

ties or not. "We ended on a note of optimism because we feel optimism should be the goal of life," maintains Navnindra. "Our treatment is very simple. There is no gimmickry, or being clever at all."

While *Sanjha Chulha* was edited by the censors at Mandi House, with sentences suddenly petering out into unnatural silences (Gargi refuses to comment on this), and the wedding scene in *Choli Daman* was apparently revised so as to ensure that communal tensions were not excited, the Behls surprisingly had no problems getting their film passed and are all praise for Doordarshan. "Where they did suggest changes, we were able to convince them to keep the script as it was," says Navnindra.

The Behls are currently working on a 90-minute telefilm based on Rani Kokilan

a popular folk tale of Punjab with a contemporary message. Navnindra has also scripted and co-directed *Dastane Punjab*, a five-part serial, along with Gursharan Singh, the veteran street theatre director from Amritsar.

Dastane Punjab tackles themes that are very bold—for Doordarshan at any rate. The five episodes are independent of each other, and if they do finally get telecast this will definitely be Doordarshan's boldest attempt yet to depict the Punjab problem. *Jung* (war) is about an idealistic school-teacher who is killed by terrorists, and whose father, in a unprecedented move, organises a mass burning pyre for both Hindus and Sikhs killed in the attack. *Hadsa* (horrific incident) is about an unemployed youth who runs away to join the terrorists, and eventually returns to discover that his father has been killed by his own gang, as he shops for his sister's trousseau. "I'll break the wrists of the man who's killed my children's father," declares his mother. And the episode ends with the boy smashing his wrists against a wall.

Over the next two and a half years, Doordarshan's Punjabi endeavours will be accorded more and more time on television. But well-known directors have, by and large, kept away believing that freedom of expression will be curtailed. "Let's face it, anything that seriously questions the government and the establishment will never get screened on Doordarshan under the present regime," says a well-known Delhi-based filmmaker. "Most of the programmes reek of crass commercialism," exclaims a theatre personality currently working on a Punjab programme.

Nonetheless, programmes there are a-plenty. Television viewers can look forward to telefilms from Lekh Tandon (*Aur Raat Beet Gayee*), Apni Apni Larai, from Sagar Sarhadi, *Aangan* by M.S. Sathya, *Saankaal* from Gurbir Singh Grewal.

Both the director-general of Doordarshan, Shiv Sharma, and A.S. Grewal are enthused about the results of their concerted Punjab effort. "The feedback from outside Punjab has been very encouraging," says Grewal, who recalls how people hurriedly left an official dinner in Shillong to crowd around a television set to catch the last episode of *Choli Daman*. "Our serials about Sikhs were well received in Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala. This proves that Sikhs easily assimilate with other people wherever they go. And that they are Indians first."

Shiraz Siddiqui/New Delhi

Both papa Dharam and beta Sunny put their keep-fit fad to good use. While Dharamendra jogs every morning to meet second wife Hema, Sunny makes his way to Juhu beach at the crack of dawn. To be greeted by lady love Dimple, who's already at the task of knocking off those extra pounds. Not that either of the love birds allows the other's presence to distract him/her from the task in hand—weight reduction. On the contrary, they do their push ups with even more enthusiasm than usual.

There's romance for you, Deol style.

We're soon going to have another attractive bombshell to keep track of. Pooja Bhatt, the Praveen Babi look-alike daughter of Mahesh Bhatt, who according to all available information is quite a chip of the old block. This sexy young thing will soon be launched by papa Bhatt in his tele-film called, appropriately enough, *Daddy*.

No, this won't be an autobiographical effort, as all of Mahesh's previous directorial ventures have been. The film will, in fact, tell the story of a young girl who grows up believing that her father is dead. Only to discover, at the age of 16, that he is alive and (oh horror!) an alcoholic.

Saawan Kumar Tak has been having a difficult time of late. First he had massive problems selling the Bombay territory of his latest film *Souten Ki Beti*. And then, there were major hassles with the censors.

Now that all these irritants have been taken care of, and the film screened, there seems to be further cause for worry. For, all who have seen the movie find it very, very ordinary.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a secretary

can either make or break a star, depending on how he handles his/her career.

The case of Sujata Mehta is illustrative. While her secretary handled her dates well enough, he went around

gorging himself silly at their expense, he still doesn't oblige with his master's dates.

If Chunky doesn't take him in hand right now, he may well live to regret it.



Dimple and Sunny : a couple who exercises together stays together



Chunky Pandey (above) and (right) Sujata Mehta: star victims

telling all who would listen the gory details of her personal life. Result: Sujata became known as this thorough unprofessional, who would let her heart rule her head. And predictably enough, producers began giving her a wide berth. After all, the last thing a filmmaker wants on his hands is a problematic star.

Next in line is Chunky Pandey. Apparently, Pandey's secretary has been making a total nuisance of himself of late. He bullies producers into organising several story sittings, just so that he can glut on the free booze and grub provided. What's more, even after

In retrospect, perhaps the best thing that could have happened to Aditya Pancholi was his girlfriend's leaving him. For, no sooner had Pooja Bedi given him up as a bad job when producers began lining up outside his door, with prize offers in hand.

Of course, it is another matter that all of them wanted him in place of some senior star or the other. Anyway, the upshot of it is that Pancholi has replaced Mithun in *Jaadugar*, Jeetendra in *Mahapaap*, Aamir Khan in *Sahebzaada*, Jackie Shroff in *Mohabbat Ka Paigham*, Sunjay Dutt in *Zardaar*, and Govinda in *Ghamand*.

Well, as they say, beggars can't be choosers. ■



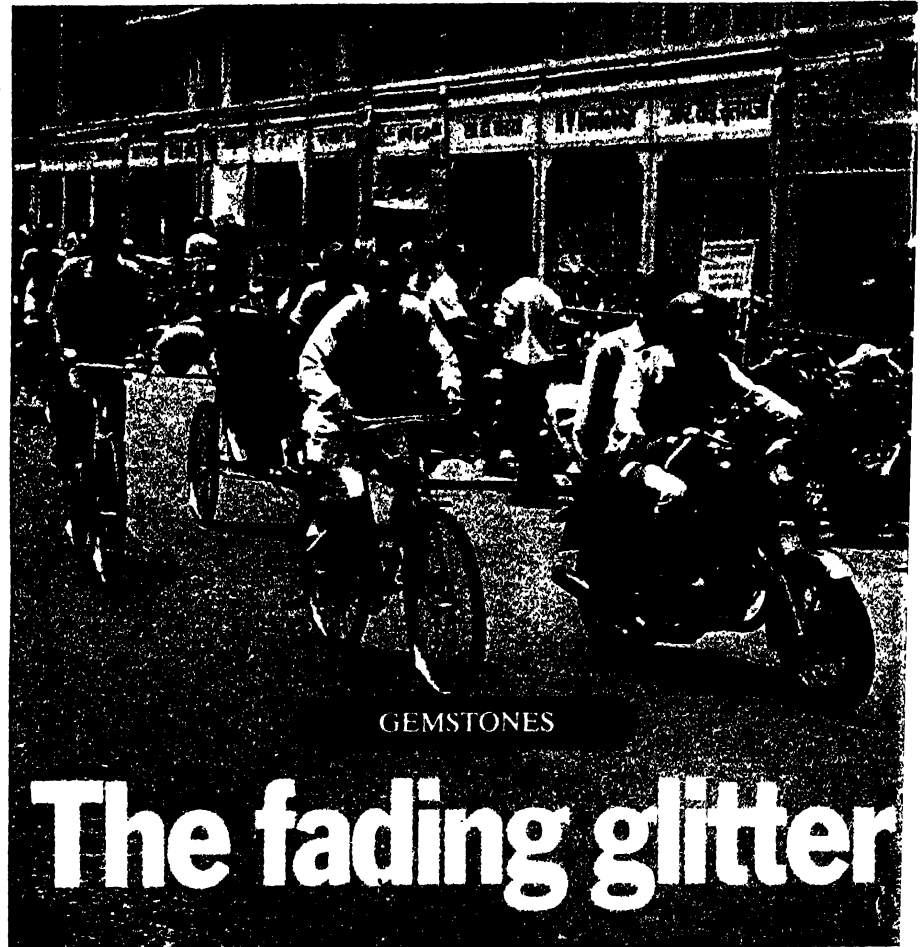
India's premier gem city—Jaipur—is losing its place in the international market for lack of quality rough emeralds

The house is decrepit. A narrow, dirty-pink building, with a cobbler's shop in front, and a staircase to the floors above crowded out by goats and *charpais*. Upstairs, in a neat, carpeted room, Haji Ahmad Hussain pulls out a sack from a trunk, and nonchalantly empties the contents on the floor: a small fortune in uncut emeralds. "These (the stones) come from abroad," says Hussain, a small-time gem trader and cutter in Jaipur's Ramganj Bazar. "And when they leave my house—cut and polished—they will look beautiful. They will grace jewellery shops in Europe and America."

Undoubtedly they will: gemstones from Jaipur have graced the world's showcases for over 50 years. But getting there is not easy any more. India—Jaipur in particular—is gradually getting squeezed out of the international market. Raw material is harder to come by, the proliferation of other cutting centres in the world has severely affected the Pink City's earlier monopoly, and primitive techniques employed by artisans here are no match for the mechanised—making for a faster output of stones—cutting shops abroad.

Like Hussain, more than 60,000 people in Jaipur depend mainly on emeralds for their livelihood. In the same way that Surat is famous for its diamond industry, Jaipur occupies the top slot for emeralds, handling almost 90 per cent of the trade. It survives by importing uncut stones—called "roughs" in the trade—cutting, shaping and polishing them, and exporting them primarily to the US, West Germany and Japan. Last year, Rs 110 crores worth of emeralds was exported, more than three times the amount in 1981. Even though Jaipur is on the world gemstone map, its perch has never been shakier. New Delhi and Bombay, the other gemstone heavyweights in India, are under the same cloud too.

Says Rashmikant Durlabhji, whose family-run company, R.Y. Durlabhji, is reputed to be the largest in the Indian emerald trade: "The biggest problem in the coloured gemstone trade today is there just isn't enough raw material to go around." Since India imports 95



GEMSTONES

The fading glitter

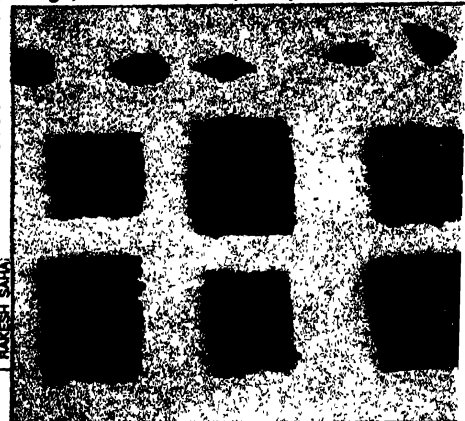
Jaipur's Johari Bazar: hub of the gem trade; (inset) a craftsman shaping the gold to be set with stones:

per cent of rough stones, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain its cutting centres. Mines have been abandoned in the Soviet Union, and some in Brazil too. Sri Lanka as a source of sapphires is drying up for Indian importers as the island finds better prices elsewhere. Ruby rough imports from Burma—a traditional source—are in disarray. The stones that India gets, often from dealers in second countries like West Germany, are both inferior in quality as well as smaller in size, losing out to countries which offer better prices and are better organised. Zimbabwe is perhaps the only country which assures India trouble-free imports. An example of high prices ruling out quality stones for the Indian trader is the superior Colombian rough emeralds. Says Durlabhji: "We can't afford Colombian stones. For example, if Brazilian stones are \$5 a carat, then Colombian is \$50."

This is where competition comes in. As far as the Indian gem industry is concerned, two countries spell dread: Israel and Thailand. Both countries have far outstripped India, with the cutting

centres in Tel Aviv and Bangkok grabbing the better stones besides doing a superior cutting and polishing job with their sophisticated machinery. In India, most cutters and polishers continue to use outdated methods: cutting stones to size by hand, faceting and polishing them on motor—often pedal-driven—wheels. Indian products take double the time taken by these two countries to finish. Also, in the absence of training institutions in India, most gemstone cutters are relatively unskilled, leading to diminished quality and wastage of stone

Rough, uncut emeralds : paucity of supplies





highly sought ornaments

in the cutting stage. Says a New Delhi gem trader who declines to be identified: "The only thing we can claim to be better at is in our understanding of stones. We have more knowledge about stones, but that's it."

Israel has emerged as the largest centre in barely 15 years. It is also India's most feared competitor—especially as far as emeralds are concerned—with Thailand chipping in with exports of cut rubies and sapphires. Admits M.L. Jain, secretary of the Jaipur Jeweller's Association: "Israel is definitely the main competitor." But what is hurting India most is that traditionally rough-stone exporting countries are taking to manufacturing. Colombia is a prime example. The volatile South American country has more or less banned the export of rough stones, using them instead to export finished products—combining the advantages of a ready raw material source and value addition. The latest bombshell has been delivered by Zambia, until early this year a major rough emerald exporter. In May, the Zambian government banned all rough exports, and appointed a New York-based company as its exclu-

Raw material is hard to come by and the proliferation of other cutting centres has affected the Pink City's earlier monopoly...But what really rankles the trade is that deposits are mined illegally

clusive distributor for cut and polished emeralds. Says Durlabhji: "Zambia could well emerge as the biggest competitor."

The 1962 edition of the *World Directory of Jewellers*, published by the Jaipur industry—took on prophetic overtones, and with a touch of irony: "...the Jaipur jewellery trade can survive now only on its capability to export. This has been necessitated because of the decline of local custom, for example, princes, *rajas* and *nawabs*." The trade has survived, but on a low key. In a way, India lives on the generosity of others.

Slice stones and bits which are rejected by cutting centres around the world—in Israel and Idar Oberstein in West Germany—are picked up by Indian importers to feed the gemstone trade. The Indian government permitted their import in 1984, but not without making it yet more difficult: on what the world calls "rejects", the Indian government charges 180 per cent import duty. What is bizarre is that the value addition from these smaller stones is barely 40 per cent. Says the New Delhi trader: "Fortunately, India's forte is the small stone, so we can extract as much value from it as possible." He adds: "The commerce ministry helps out a little bit with export regulations (exports are tax-free) but the rest are all humbug." In a situation like this, it is hardly surprising that a large chunk of the trade (40 to 60 per cent) is conducted illegally.

What really rankles the trade—more than competition—is that there are raw material deposits in India which are either mined incompetently or entirely ignored. Jammu and Kashmir has deposits of aquamarine and some

amount of sapphire. But government control is non-existent and deposits are illegally mined by private operators. Ruby is found in Tamil Nadu, around two small villages, Sevithurangapatti and Kiranur; a railway project, laying tracks between Karur and Dindigul, has also discovered rubies. But no tabs are kept on finds. Villagers sell off their booty during weekly markets to local traders, who then sell the stones to big-time operators in cities, who in turn export them either illegally in cut and polished form, or simply as roughs.

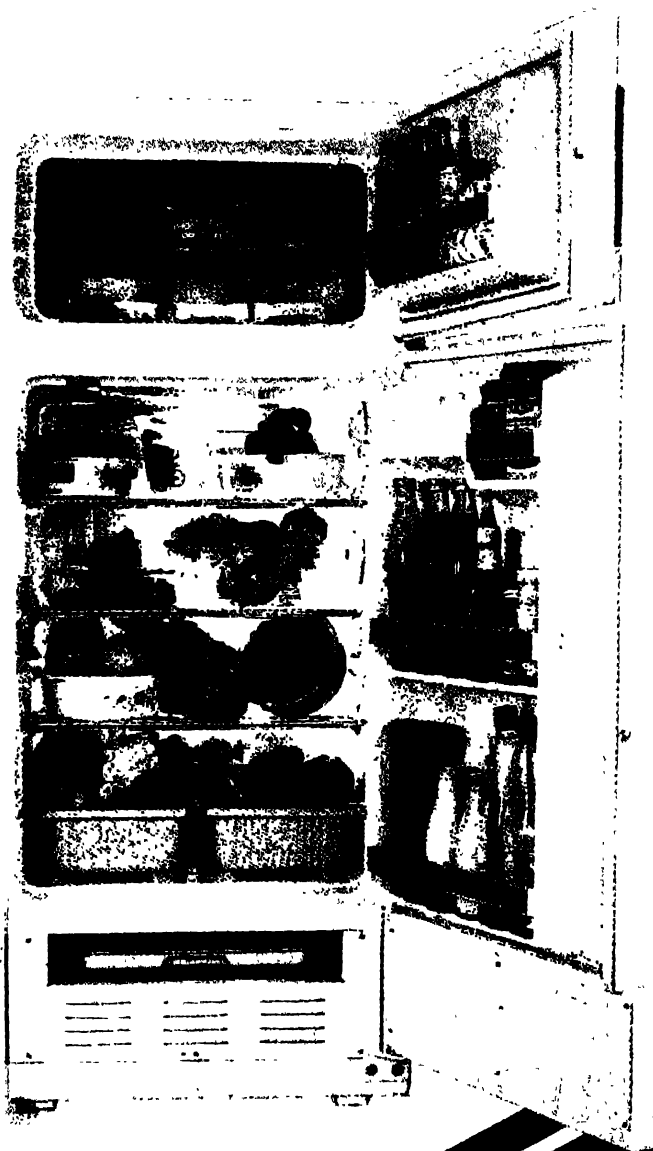
Orissa is practically dotted with precious and semi-precious stone deposits. The nascent Orissa Gem Corporation, besides keeping a tab on where what stones are found, doesn't do much else. Around 100 to 200 kg of aquamarine and beryl—both semi-precious stones—find their way out of Orissa illegally. A recent mining report by the New York-based International Coloured Gemstone Association (ICGA) caps it all. Says the report: "There is a ruby mining area stretching 50 km in western Orissa near the border of the neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh... Lots of two or three kg stones can be purchased at any given point in time. Orissa is currently considering setting up a state-run mine in this area." More excerpts: "Iolite is found in this ruby producing area... cartloads of iolite are seen in the villages... White topaz is mined at Patnagarh."



Cut and polished precious stones

This material is being mined illegally and production has been estimated at several hundred tonnes. It is believed that some of this material finds its way to neighbouring countries." What the report mentions gently, without fanfare, the gem trade confirms without hesitation. Emeralds from Orissa and Rajasthan, diamonds from Orissa—just scattered in the sands of the Mahanadi river—the list goes on. Local traders form cartels with local politicians and the business goes on. Officials at the ministry of steel and mines in New Delhi declined comment on this matter.

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The master craftsman

The gold enamel work of Kudrat Singh is legendary

The business card simply reads: Sardar Kudrat Singh Jeweller, 1565, Rasta Jariyon, Jaipur. Nothing unusual about that, especially in a city that is literally choked with jewellers. But mention Kudrat Singh's name to anyone in the trade—practically anywhere in India—and you will be told "he is the best there is" in his sphere: gold enamel work, or *mina-kari*. His work fetched him a Padma Shree last year, capping a career which started with a President's Master Craftsman Award in 1966. However, his real status as an artist par excellence shows up in his formidable client list.

"The Modis, Birlas, Tatas, Bangurs, all have my *mina* work," says Singh. So does Queen Elizabeth II of England, the irrepressible Lady Diana, as well as innumerable royal scions in India. He worked overtime to fill orders for railway minister Madhavrao Scindia's daughter's lavish wedding last year.

The septuagenarian—belying his reputation—lives in a small, dank *haveli* in Jaipur's Johari Bazar area. This is where he works, with his four sons—all craftsmen of repute—helping him out. Work is complicated: first sketching the design on paper, then transferring it laboriously on gold by gouging out the metal, setting stones, and finally, minutely painting over the designs with a mixture of natural dyes and finely powdered precious and semi-precious stones. Often, necklaces and bracelets take three to four months to craft. Says Singh: "You have to put your soul into your work.

That is the only way."

Jaipur's enamel workers prefer the Champleve method for enamelling, where patterns are dug out of the metal itself. Another method—not as popular—the Cloisonne, uses patterns raised on a surface by welding strips of metal onto it. It is then filled in with enamel work.)

Necklaces, bracelets, brooches, gold cups and wine decanters delicately inlaid with diamonds, emeralds and rubies are among Singh's specialities. The costs vary from Rs 25,000 for a pair of bangles to over Rs 70,000 for a necklace—and that is just for the unexceptional stuff. Singh is reluctant to discuss specific prices, assignments and clients—citing the Gold Control Act—beyond those that will not affect his trade, based as much on trust and anonymity of a client as on his consummate artistry. Says Singh diplomatically: "A person comes to me and says he wants something done in a particular way,

Kudrat Singh: best in the trade



Council does just that—help out with exports. There isn't a single other agency which actively coordinates the gemstone industry in its totality.

The only visible measures are on view in Jaipur, but they are more like a drop in the ocean. A Gemstone Industrial Park, coming up about 11 km south of the city, is being developed by the

according to his dreams. I give him exactly what he wants. This is a person who wants art and has money." He adds: "I prefer to work with gold. It gives fullness to an ornament that no other metal can give." Of late, however, his clients are increasingly comprising rich traders from Ahmedabad and Bombay.

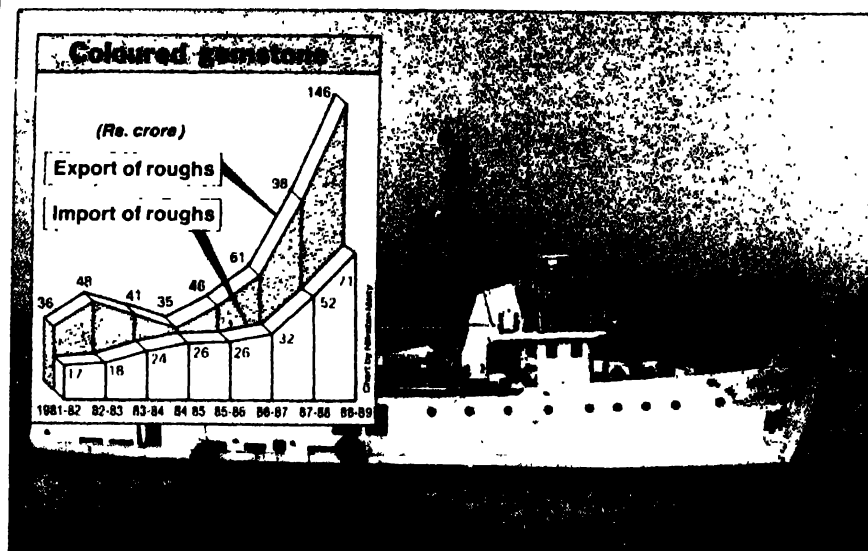
Kudrat Singh has a remarkable advantage—one of high connections. His family has been jewellers to the Jaipur royal family since the early part of the 16th century. According to Singh, Maharaja Man Singh, Emperor Akbar's military commander, spotted his ancestors in Lahore, on his way back from Kabul, and brought the family over to his palace in Amber (near present-day Jaipur) to be his personal jewellers. Ever since, Singh's family has primarily worked for the royal family—till some years after 1947, which served to reduce royal patronage.

Diminished royal patronage apart, Kudrat Singh has also to deal with the fact that people—even those with money—may not want to wait for months for a Singh creation. "They want things quickly," says Singh. He adds, "That is not art, and products are not as much pieces of art as they used to be. But we have to live, so we take those orders. This kind of commercial production takes three weeks." Echoing the reality is Singh's current project: a shop at the entrance of his *haveli* catering to casual buyers, tourists, and diplomats in New Delhi. It mainly displays silver-based jewellery. These buyers may lack royal blood or pots of money, but they can be sure of one thing: their purchases may not have the aura of Singh's custom-made creations, but will be exquisitely crafted with an unparalleled touch.

The ICGA report concludes: "The outlook for increased world gemstone production is good. Many underdeveloped gem-producing countries (Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Thailand) which have long used small-scale, unplanned, and uncontrolled mining methods are now investing in heavy earth-moving equipment, modern mining techniques and professional consultants to maximise the foreign exchange earned by their gemstone deposits." None of this is happening in India. The Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion

state government in conjunction with the Diamond and Gem Development Corporation. The park will focus primarily on training prospective traders, cutters and polishers. The Rs 20-crore project is touting an employment potential for 70,000 people and a long-term contribution to exports of approximately Rs 700 crores. Another park is being planned at Haldwani in Uttar Pradesh.

It should help people like Mohammad Aziz, a 15-year-old from Bihar. Aziz spends all his day working as an apprentice in Jaipur's crowded Ghat Gate area, the main centre for the city's cutting and



polishing industry. He is still learning, he says, "as shaping stones is not as easy" as he had thought it would be. He takes home a meagre Rs 15 at the end of the day, but hopes to rise to a trader's position in a few years—much like his tutor who started off as an unskilled labourer and worked his way up to a supervisory position, and managing a small business in cut emeralds. Says Aziz: "We need modern machines. Then we can make better stones." And presumably, export better, as far as the trade is concerned.

Merchants still gather every evening

at Johari Bazar—Jaipur's gemstone district—inspecting, buying and rejecting stones, although most of the trade is now conducted behind closed doors. The Muslims have a monopoly over cutting and polishing, and Jains over trading, and the *status quo* is maintained. But if the government does not lend a hand, and the country's gemstone trade blinds itself to the new realities of international marketing, Johari Bazar could well become a memory, with abandoned forts and derelict palaces being Jaipur's only draw.

Sudeep Chakravarti/Jaipur

COFFEE

A bumper problem

Growers are up in arms against the Coffee Board for agreeing to the suspension of the export quota system

Trouble was brewing in the coffee market long before the fateful breakdown of talks in London. But when the International Coffee Organisation (ICO) suspended the quota system at its meeting on 3 July, the market was stirred as never before. Coffee prices crashed in London as expected, and the repercussions at home were immediately felt. At the biggest-ever export pool auctions conducted by the Coffee Board at its headquarters in Bangalore on 5 July, prices fell by almost Rs 400 per 50 kg. The exporters were not perturbed but the growers were despondent, looking at a bleak future because of a market glut.

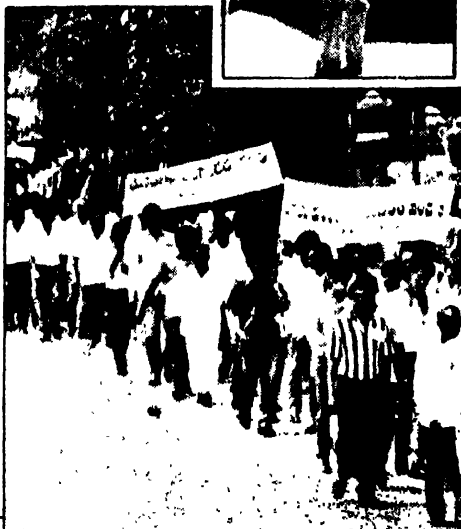
The growers were angry that the Indian representatives at the meeting of the 74-member ICO supported the suspension of the quota system. The Coffee Board chairman, G.Y. Krishnan, expressed "the hope that in a free market India will be able to dispose of its stocks". He was of the opinion that a free market for "one or two years" would be helpful to India, although it would result in lower prices which could hurt the planters. The equivocal tone from the Coffee Board notwithstanding, it was clear that India had lobbied at the ICO meeting for a free market.

The Karnataka Planters' Association (KPA), in a statement on 11 July, noted:

"When there is surplus coffee in the world, it would be difficult for the board to predict optimism in selling (more) coffee... The fanciful theories that the superior Indian coffee will fare better against the inferior alien coffees now that the International Coffee Agreement has collapsed is not founded on actual facts." The KPA backed its argument with figures: the world coffee production in 1989-90 is expected to be 95 million bags while the global absorption is just short of 90 million bags.

In India the crop this year is expected to be a bumper one at 2.2 lakh tonnes which would leave a huge surplus. Under the quota system the country exports around 50,000 tonnes. The country also manages to sell an additional 50,000 tonnes under an agreement with the USSR, which is a non-quota member. At the same time, domestic consumption has stagnated at 55,000 tonnes. As a result the surplus stocks within the country last year were more than 35,000 tonnes. The growers fear that while there was a guarantee of exports under the quota system, Indian coffee in a free market would suffer because of severe undercutting by countries like Brazil, Colombia and Indonesia which will be keen to dispose of their surplus stocks.

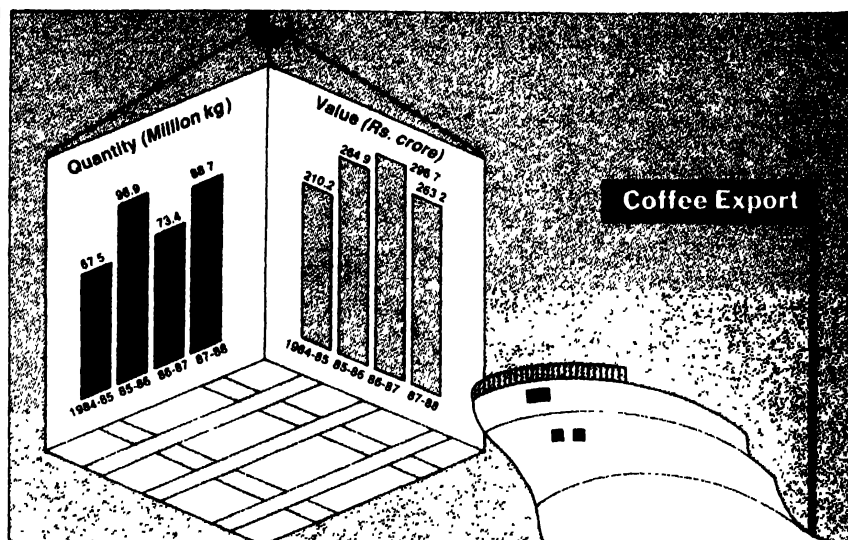
Coffee planters and growers demonstrate on the streets of Bangalore: bleak future in a glut market; (inset) the Coffee Board headquarters: strange decision



The fact is that Brazil and Colombia which had cornered 40 per cent of the market were opposed to the suspension of the quota system. But the United States of America, the biggest consumer, supported the move by some countries including India which wanted a bigger slice of the market within the quota system, or alternatively, preferred a free market. The Indian hope of better days in a free market is rooted in the fact that the country produces superior quality of coffee which could corner a bigger share of the global market with aggressive promotion. Even if the quota system is restored within a couple of years, the country can then justify its claim for a bigger quota. So is the rationale of the Coffee Board.

But the sudden crash in prices has created panic and sharpened the long-standing resentment against the Coffee Board. The Karnataka Growers' Federation submitted a memorandum for Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at the Raj Bhavan after a protest demonstration against the board on 13 July in Bangalore. The issue has also taken a political turn with north-south colours. The memorandum read: "A feeling is developing among the growers that they are being discriminated against and that the apathy of the central government is

The sudden crash in prices has created panic...Frightened growers are demanding that purchase tax be suspended



due to the distance that separates the coffee-growing areas situated in the remote hills of the Western Ghats in the south from the capital."

Seventy per cent of the country's coffee is grown in Karnataka. And the state levies 13 per cent purchase tax on the Coffee Board which had to cough up Rs 124 crores from the growers' pool fund following a Supreme Court ruling in May last year. Frightened growers are demanding that in these hard times, purchase tax should be suspended by Governor Venkatasubbaiah, and Coffee Board dues to the state should be settled with central grants and subsidies.

The growers have charged the board of inefficiency and corruption and de-

manded the removal of chairman Krishnan, a former Congress(I) member of the Lok Sabha. The memorandum read: "We do not welcome the appointment of a politician as chairman of the Coffee Board... The post should be given to a coffee grower." They have demanded that 50 per cent of the 33-member board should be growers who are duly elected. At present ten growers are nominated on the board.

With the Cassandras predicting that prices will fall by another 20 per cent, the growers are bound to become more and more militant. The Coffee Board which is the sole agency to pool and market the crop, seems to be in deep trouble.

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

MODIS

Back on the warpath

Now there are two factions in the Gujarmal Modi branch of the family: KK versus BK

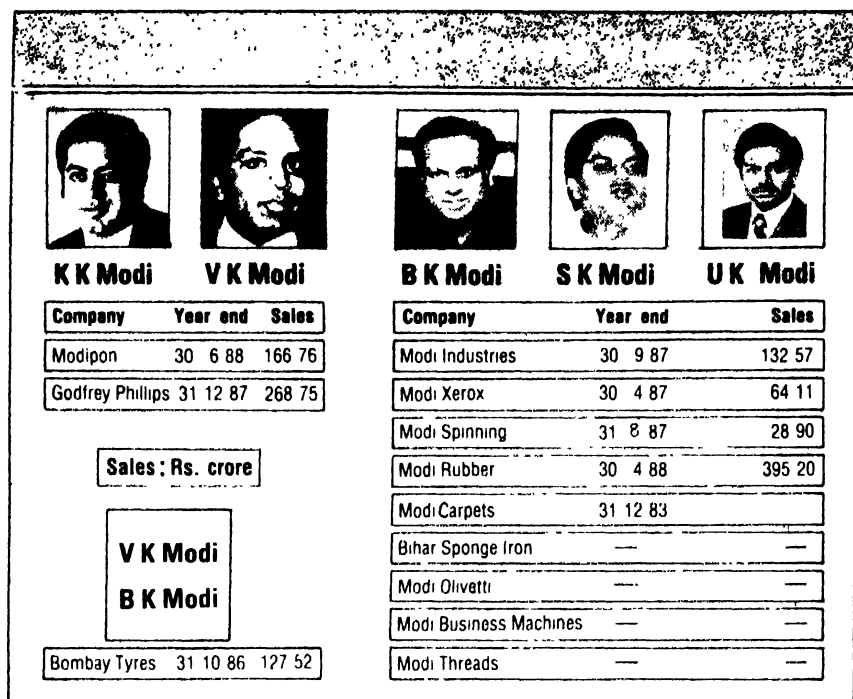
Life on earth began, as the scientists say, with the protean one-cell organism breaking itself into two. In the Indian corporate sector, life begins by splitting family businesses among its numerous members. And like the one-cell organism, which belonged to a lower order among living organisms, could Indian business be said to have remained stagnant at a lower stage of capitalist development given the continuous bickering among the so-called family-owners, who at best own only a marginal

portion of the equity capital?

Scarcely had the ink run dry on an agreement to divide the Modi group of companies between the two warring camps of the Delhi-based family headed by K.N. Modi on one side and K.K. Modi on the other, when fresh rumblings were heard of serious differences between K.K. Modi and his three brothers. He, of course, had one ally, V.K. Modi, his immediate younger brother.

Interestingly, even though the earlier





division between the K.N. Modi and K.K. Modi families had not yet been worked out in detail, the financial institutions (FIs) who own the largest chunk of shares in the Modi companies, and chartered accountants were now being instructed to undertake a fresh division.

K.K. Modi's three brothers, BK, UK and SK, had proposed that the three of them would form one group, and would have nothing to do with KK and VK. They even moved the FIs to split Modi Rubber into two parts. The Modis were thus battling again over Modi Rubber, the tyre company which has proved to be one of the most successful of the Modi companies and was in the eye of the storm in the earlier dispute as well. The threesome group have claimed 60 per cent of the total assets of the family, leaving the balance 40 per cent for the other two.

The new round of squabbling began with KK and VK insisting on inducting their sons—two of the former and one of the latter—into business as equal partners. This would certainly have upset the appiecart of the present holdings of the different brothers. Hence, the B.K. Modi camp was quick to put in its objections. They maintained that the sons could be brought in only after a clear division of the family assets among the five brothers.

The B.K. Modi group has now proposed that the Rs 400-crore Modi Rubber be split into two. This should not be difficult to do, they argue, since the company has two factories at two diffe-

rent locations: one at Modipuram and the other at Modinagar. The group also has another tyre unit, Bombay Tyres, with a factory in the city after which it is named.

However, the FIs may not be very keen to split Modi Rubber between the two feuding camps. After all, it is not all that simple to bifurcate a company just because it has two factories at two locations. Such a course of action is likely to erode the viability of the company with the end-lossers being the FIs, who hold 51 per cent of the equity capital, more than the Modis themselves. In fact, the FIs appear to be consolidating their position by picking up further Modi Rubber equity from the

The new round of squabbling began with KK and VK insisting on inducting their sons into business as equal partners. This would certainly have upset the appiecart of the present holdings of the different brothers

market. The reason is obvious: to increase their voting rights which would give them a greater say in the event of the feud escalating into a bitter war. The FIs are also taking advance action in the other tyre company of the Modis. The 35 per cent stake that Modi Rubber has in Bombay Tyres has reportedly been transferred by the FIs to the Unit Trust of India. This raises their control over Bombay Tyres to 57 per cent. And, maybe, their voice could go against the wishes of the warring brothers.

The present tiff is between BK and VK, both of whom run the tyre business. B.K. Modi, who has been instrumental in roping in some of the leading international names into the Modi fold of activities—Olivetti and Rank Xerox—is said to be working for a clear-cut division of the family assets so that in future there is no confusion about individual possessions. Once the ground is clear for him and there are no cross-claims, BK is reported to be planning to launch a series of high-tech collaborations for his group of companies.

At the same time, BK is aware of the fact that his son (15) is yet to grow up and it will be a while before he can help him in business. Meanwhile, his entire activities could become vulnerable and since he needs to have the cushion of a group, he has his younger brothers with him. Besides, business exigencies could be better met within a group in so far as losses in one line of activity could be subsidised by earnings of some others. Indeed, for a group venturing into high-tech diversification, where the stakes could lie somewhere between a flying start and a headlong fall, group backing could be a decisive factor. The group could equally help the other two brothers—SK and UK—with expert guidance from BK, who is undoubtedly one of the most successful members of the entire family.

The three brothers have already reached an understanding about the group entity, including sharing of liabilities of the different companies within their fold. However, differences between the trio and the duo have reached such a stage that BK, SK and UK even virtually boycotted the marriage ceremony of V.K. Modi's son. The only hope that the faction fight might not escalate into a full-scale war is that the mother of the five—Dayawati Modi—has reportedly persuaded her sons to agree to a peaceful division of the family assets, no doubt to avoid the earlier protracted fight between her sons and their cousins.

Anjan Roy/New Delhi

Oswal's secret

The question that industry circles were asking is how did Abhey Oswal pull off the Shahjahanpur project from the jaws of defeat? And that, too, by submitting a revised proposal only a day before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs met to decide on the issue. The secret of Oswal's unusual coup now seems to be out. He is using technology from Snamprogetti for the Rs 695-crore gas-based fertiliser project. Starting from the HBJ pipeline issue, Snam has been in the thick of con-



Abhey Oswal: clever strategy

troversies involving even the Prime Minister's household. But obviously, the Snam name still works in the corridors of power. While Oswal may be the toast of business circles for having achieved the impossible, it now transpires that he had decided to go in for Snam know-how

even before the project had received the letter of intent. But for obvious reasons, he had kept it a closely-guarded secret. If Snam's participation could ensure his bagging the contract, any leakage in advance could also have led to adverse media publicity which might have put paid to his chances. Oswal has definitely proved his credentials.

Bukhara on franchise

Welcomgroup is all set to make a big splash overseas as a restaurateur. And it will do so with a unique reverse franchise agreement with the Sheraton chain. After the Oberois broke off their ties with Sheraton, Welcomgroup took up the franchise from the US chain for India. Now, Sheraton has obtained a franchise from Welcomgroup for running restaurants styled after Bukhara, the classy restaurant in the Maurya Sheraton in the capital. Sheraton will launch the first Bukhara restaurant in its Hong Kong property. The furniture, decor and chef will be provided by Welcomgroup. Sheraton also plans to follow up with similar Bukhara restaurants in North America, Australia and some of the South-East Asian countries where it runs hotels.

Murjani takes on banks

Indian banks have a new non-resident Indian adversary. First it was Rajendra Sethia whose Esal Commod-

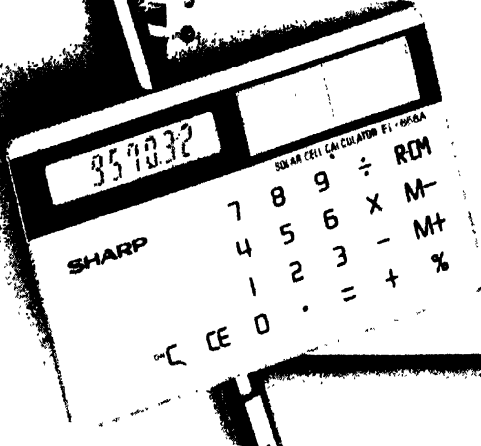
ities became bankrupt, leaving Punjab National Bank with a massive bad debt. Now it is Mike Murjani, the Gloria Vanderbilt man, who runs a multi-million dollar international designer garment business. Reportedly, State Bank of India, Bank of India, United Commercial Bank and Indian Bank are jointly owed \$22 million by Murjani. The four banks together filed suits in Hong Kong claiming that Murjani had not played fair with them and restrained



Murjani: claiming damages

him from leaving Hong Kong to sign an agreement with a French bank for the sale of his company, Tommy Hilfinger Co.

Murjani, in turn, has hit back by filing a \$20 million anti-trust suit against the Indian banks in New York. And he is also planning to file a conspiracy suit against the four banks in Bombay. His argument: the action of the Indian banks in holding him back in Hong Kong led to his deal with the French bank falling through resulting in a \$20 million loss. Murjani, it seems, believes in offence being the best form of defence!



The death of an MLA

The murder of a Congress(I) MLA sparks off uproarious scenes in the state Assembly

BIHAR

An unprecedented ruckus in the Assembly in the wake of the kidnapping and murder of the Congress(I) MLA, Triloki Harijan, led to the making of dubious legislative history. For almost a week, a vociferous Opposition stalled proceedings in the Bihar Assembly, leading to the expulsion and suspension of as many as 75 Opposition members from the House for five working days. The rest of the Opposition members preferred to boycott the session, creating the unique spectacle of an Opposition-less House.

Unruly scenes have of late become a regular feature of the Bihar Assembly. Pandemonium in the well of the House, members taking off their clothes to lodge protest, snatching of microphones and breaking of chairs have become easy short-cuts to hog headlines. And this has been abetted by the government which finds it convenient to keep the Opposition out or to keep them busy on a few issues so that others are overlooked. In the middle of July, the budgetary demands of as many as four departments were passed by the house in the absence of the Opposition and without any meaningful debate on them. Nothing could have suited the government better.

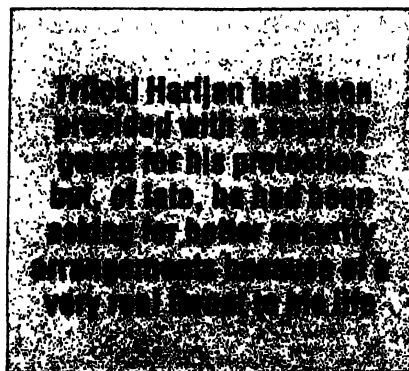
The trouble centred round the Opposition demand that an adjournment motion moved by some members be first accepted to facilitate a debate on the gruesome murder of the Congress(I) MLA. The speaker and the treasury benches opposed the demand that would have amounted to censuring the government. Instead, they favoured a special debate on the issue. They did finally have their way, but not before the 75 Opposition members were bodily lifted by the watch and ward staff and removed from the House. The suspended members, on subsequent days, were even prevented from entering the Assembly premises and they, in protest,

marched to the Raj Bhavan and handed over a memorandum to the Governor, demanding the dismissal of the government.

The murder of a sitting member when the Assembly was in session was unprecedented, the Opposition said. Triloki Harijan, they pointed out, had been given a security guard for his protection but, of late, he had been asking for better security arrangements because of a very real threat to his life. The government, the Opposition alleged, took his request lightly and that the MLA had to die in order to prove that his apprehensions were real. There could not be a more shameful testimony, they said, to the deteriorating law and order situation in the state and claimed the Congress(I) government had forfeited its right to rule.

The police and the government did make themselves look foolish. The police bodyguard provided to Harijan had gone on leave on the fateful day without informing the superintendent of police (SP) as he was required to do. There could not be a more telling evidence of the indiscipline prevailing in the state police. The murder of Triloki Harijan forced a reluctant police top brass to admit that a former MLA of the same district, Ram Nagina Yadav, had been kidnapped by dacoits in the last week of June and that he remained still untraced.

Even before the state could absorb the twin shocks, the police claimed in Patna that they had managed to rescue Yadav. But, on the same day, a nephew of Yadav contested the claim and a red-faced chief minister was forced to admit in the Assembly that it was a case of mistaken identity. Yadav remained untraced till the time of going to press and was believed to have been killed.



An Opposition MLA being carried away from the Assembly: rare sight; (inset) Triloki Harijan: inexplicable murder



That was not all. The biggest embarrassment for the police was the revelation that it was none other than the dreaded dacoit of West Champaran, Patthal Nonia, who was responsible for the murder of Triloki Harijan. A known lieutenant of Nonia, Bhagwati Ojhria, a Tharu tribesman, had knocked on the door of the MLA on the night of 6 July and had forced Harijan to accompany him "to meet Patthal Nonia".

This was embarrassing because the police had claimed months ago that they had eliminated Nonia and the government, according to sources, had even recommended a gallantry award for the SP of West Champaran. Following Triloki Harijan's murder, the police reluctantly admitted that Nonia might still be alive. Bhagwati Ojhria, they claimed, had escaped into Nepal and his arrest alone, they said, could unravel the mystery behind the MLA's murder.

The cause of Triloki Harijan's murder remains shrouded in mystery as the MLA was indeed a popular and a rather unassuming person. Although he played a vital role in the campaign to oust Jagannath Mishra in 1983, he maintained a low profile in the subsequent period. His life-style was modest and he was rarely

heard in or outside the Assembly. Political reasons were, therefore, ruled out at the very outset. Preliminary inquiries suggested that the dacoit gang led by Nonia suspected Triloki Harijan of having provided the police with vital information, which led to an encounter in



KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN

which a close lieutenant of Nonia was killed while he himself barely escaped. But whether this was reason enough for Nonia to kill the MLA is still being debated, especially because the police deny that he had helped them in any way in countering the dacoits in Champaran, which is referred to as Bihar's Chambal.

Champaran district provides a fascinating study in history. While this was the district where Mahatma Gandhi had launched his *satyagraha* against the oppressive indigo farmers and his *ashram* remains, albeit in a dilapidated state, in the district, stark inequalities mark life in the region today. Half a dozen big landlords dominate the district's economy and they are known to possess thousands of acres of land above the ceiling and are believed to patronise the various criminal gangs that operate there. Some people believe that the MLA could not have been killed without the tacit support of some of these landlords.

Replying to a special two-hour debate in the Assembly on the murder, chief minister Satyendra Narayan Sinha, discounted reports that the deceased had sought additional protection. "Had it been so", he said, "the legislator would not have agreed to send his bodyguard away." Six legislators, he pointed out, had been killed in the state since Independence and shocking as the crimes were, never had the Opposition insisted on an adjournment motion.

Jaishankar Gupta/Patna

In troubled waters

The UDF accuses the CPI(M) of having received kickbacks from a construction company



KERALA

The CPI(M) in Kerala is fast realising that it is impossible to run a government and maintain a clean image at the same time. Last week, M.V. Mani of the Kerala Congress(M) revealed in the Assembly that "there was corruption to the tune of Rs 50 lakhs in the concreting work of the tunnel in the Lower Periyar Hydroelectric project". Mani said that the CPI(M) electricity minister, Sivadasa Menon, and his party received kickbacks for a contract awarded to the Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) for build-

while claiming that the LDF was "a clean government that works".

The crux of the controversy is an agreement between the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) and HCC for the construction of a 12.79-km long tunnel in the Lower Periyar Hydel Project. M.V. Mani's allegation is that a panel of experts constituted by the KSEB advised the board, in April 1988, against the use of substandard 'muck' (a sort of building material obtained from excavation or rock blasting) in the lining of the tunnel. But in March 1989, the KSEB, "under pressure from a top CPI(M) leader", persuaded the panel to change its stand. Mani produced a letter written by an executive engineer, asking the KSEB not to use any "inferior material. And what was shocking was that a portion of the concrete lining in the tunnel collapsed last month, lending credence to Mani's charge that substandard material had indeed been used.

M.V. Mani, the soft-spoken Kerala Congress(M) MLA, told SUNDAY: "The government is fighting shy of a judicial inquiry because its hands are not clean. There is enough evidence to nail the CPI(M) and its top leadership." Mani pointed out that the panel of experts had originally stipulated that ISI standards be adhered to in choosing the construction material, but 10 months later, it waived the selection principle with regard to the use of 'muck'. Moreover, the panel had initially imposed a financial liability clause on HCC because the KSEB was 'incurring overhead costs in procuring fresh 'muck' from quarries away from the project site and transporting it to the location of the tunnel.

The panel's revised decision relieved the HCC of the burden of bearing the transportation costs and other charges. It is now the KSEB that has to shell out an additional Rs three crores for supplying cement to HCC for reinforcing the concrete lining comprising "inferior quality muck", while HCC has gained over Rs two crores—the amount it would have had to spend on transporting 'muck' from quarries to the work site.

Another serious allegation against the KSEB is that the original proposed thickness of the concrete lining has been reduced from 40 cms to 30 cms. The KSEB says this was done because of technical reasons and because it saved money. But the financial advantage was more than offset by the fact that HCC raised the concreting costs, thereby making a sizeable profit. According to Balakrishna Pillai, a former power minis-



E.K. Nayanar: scandals are catching up

ing the lower Periyar tunnel. The Opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) repeatedly walked out of the House in protest against the ruling Left Democratic Front's (LDF) refusal to order a judicial inquiry into the allegation.

It is the first serious charge of corruption levelled against the 28-month old CPI(M)-led Nayanar ministry. Though Menon has denied the charge, the CPI(M) leadership in the state is finding it difficult to justify its stance on the issue which threatens to tarnish its image. All these months, the CPI(M) in Kerala had maintained a holier-than-thou attitude. It had been accusing the UDF, led by the Congress(I), of corruption

ter who is himself mixed up in controversies over the Edamalayar project: "There had been pressure from HCC to revise the rates but the earlier board refused. But when the LDF came to power the board was reconstituted to include people like M.M. Lawrence, who was the only non-official member of the board. This board has increased the rate substantially." In Trivandrum, rumours are doing the rounds that M.M. Lawrence, the LDF convenor and CPI(M)'s powerful fund-raiser, is involved in the latest tunnel scam. It is alleged that it was Lawrence who influenced the KSEB to pressurise the expert panel to revise its decisions.

But what has irked the Opposition and raised doubts about the CPI(M)'s 'clear credentials' is LDF's refusal to initiate a judicial inquiry into the matter. The Opposition UDF's case is that an inquiry must be ordered because of the precedent created by the Edamalayar project. When there was a leak and cracks in the Edamalayar tunnel, the previous UDF government, after initial vacillation, conceded the CPI(M)-led Opposition's demand for a probe. But the LDF maintains that the two cases are in no way similar and says the Opposition could file a complaint with a commission under the Kerala Publicmen's Corruption Act. Though chief minister Nayanar himself concedes that such a commission does not exist at present he assures that it will be formed soon. But the Opposition feels that nothing short of a judicial probe would help reveal the truth.

The tunnel scandal has provided the Congress(I) with a stick to beat the Marxists with in the campaigns for the coming parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, two more ministers in the Nayanar Cabinet were accused of corruption. K. Chandrasekharan, the Janata Dal Education Minister in the LDF, has been accused by T.M. Jacob of Kerala Congress(M) of charging sums ranging from Rs 15,000 to Rs 75,000 for giving jobs to people in the Kerala Grandhasala Sangham, of which he was the ex-officio chairman. Seethi Haji of the Muslim League has alleged that T.K. Hamza, the CPI(M) public works minister, had received bribes totalling Rs 30 lakhs for awarding contracts for the construction of three bridges in the state. The plethora of corruption charges against the CPI(M)-led LDF is likely to increase as the Congress (I) realises that this is the best way to counter the CPI(M)'s offensive against them. The CPI(M) leadership in the state has no answer to Congress(I) strategy as the muck flung on them following the tunnel scandal is proving difficult to wash.

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

Pushed to the wall

Village bodies are up in arms against illegal occupation of their lands by government agencies



Retrieving lost land is not yet a lost case in Goa, at least not with 225 *comunidades* deciding to go in for direct action. A *comunidade* is an institution by virtue of which land, comprising agricultural plots and orchards, is collectively held. The land and the trees are owned by the members of a *comunidade* and the income from them is shared equally.

Setting the pace of events against bureaucratic legerdemain through which the government tried to grab land belonging to the collective bodies was the Serula *comunidade* of Bardez taluka which demolished a wall built by the Panjim Planning and Development Authority (PPDA) around 20,000 sq. m. of land, razed to the ground a village bar which, apparently, was built on one of its 1,500-sq. m. plots, and tore down 26 huge hoardings at Porvorim. Taking a cue from its actions, the *comunidades* at Mapuse, Saligao, Assagao and Olaulim are also taking similar actions against illegal occupants.

This angry strike from the *comunidades* was expected for quite some time. The dissatisfaction of their members had been growing, as applications for the sanction of *comunidade* land filed by the *gaonkars* (that's what the *comunidade* members are known as) for building houses were kept pending by government administrators in charge of these bodies, while government servants, no matter which part of the country they came from, got their papers processed within a few months. This was a clear case of favouritism, the

villagers alleged.

"The government connived with certain vested interests in the *comunidades* and ensured that their elected panels failed to get notified in the official gazette," complained Sebastian Pinto, president of the Serula *comunidade*. The government has been appointing its henchmen in the administrative panels of these bodies and, as a result, applications of the government servants for land allotment always got preferential treatment, he explained. This practice of nominating the committee members was ultimately challenged in the High Court and the government was forced to hold elections last December.

The *gaonkars* accuse the government of cheating them of huge sums of money by keeping land prices artificially depressed. For instance, the price of a piece of prime land in Porvorim, as per the government's valuation, was only Rs

Unauthorized structures
being demolished
by the *gaonkars*:
spontaneous action

**The recent
demolitions of
unauthorised
structures have sent
shock waves through
the administration
and have created
consternation among
land-grabbers**



96 per sq. m. but could fetch up to Rs 400 per sq. m. if developed, and some plots did actually sell at Rs 600 per sq. m. Elsewhere, at Verna Plateau, where an ambitious electronic city has been planned over 100,22,925 sq. m. of *comunidade* land spread across Cortalim, Quelossim and Nagoa, the government was willing to offer only Rs 10 per sq. m., while developed land in the same area was selling at Rs 230 per sq. m. In fact, not very many years back the government had acquired *comunidade*

land near Panjim at less than Rs 10 per sq. m.

Besides, the government has also been accused of reserving some prime plots for people who are its favourites. For example, hutments have been allowed to come up on plot 35 of lot 156 at Porvorim and the administrator of the *comunidades* has been reluctant to order their demolition in the hope that the owner will settle for a less encumbered plot and he will be able to allot the land to one of his cronies.

The recent demolitions have created shock waves in the administration and among land grabbers. Hectic efforts are on to regularise all illegal constructions by getting no-objection certificates from the administrator. In a desperate bid to stall demolitions, the government has refused police protection to the *comunidades* during demolition work. The collector of north Goa, R.L. Jaiprakash, said that the demolitions carried out by the Serula *comunidade* were illegal, as it did not have the permission of the administrator. But S.V. Shirodkar, the



administrator of Bardez *comunidade* refused to comment on the actions and, so far, no case has been filed against the Serula body. A probe has, however, been ordered to determine whether the demolitions were legal or not. But despite the government's open hostility towards their moves, the *comunidades* remain undeterred. "We want the lands in their original state, with plantations on them," said one *gaonkar*. And where there is a will, there might also be a way.

Oiga Telle/Panaji

Hour of the rebels

Congress(I) dissidents train their guns on chief minister Chaudhary and M.L. Fotedar

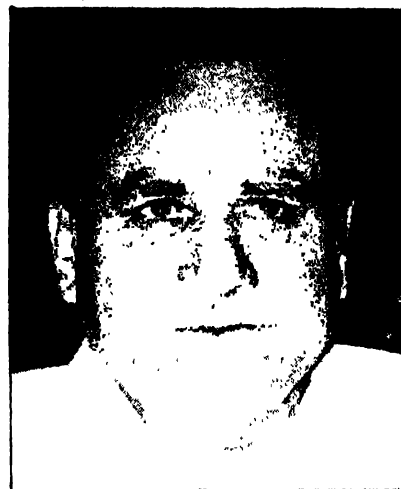
GUJARAT

It was perhaps the worst meeting Amarsinh Chaudhary faced in the four eventful years he has been in office as the chief minister. The party dissidents had always kept him on tenterhooks, but on 15 July, when the PCC(I) called a meeting to discuss the problems facing the local self-government bodies in the state, the rebels virtually tore Chaudhary apart in the presence of four All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I) bosses.

The 200 invitees, who included MPs, MLAs, presidents of urban municipalities and *panchayat* chiefs and ministers, sat helplessly through a five-hour long bedlam as one rebel after another accused the Chaudhary regime of having failed to uphold the state's interests. The pro-Chaudhary elements desperately tried to shout down the dissidents, and that resulted in a free-for-all that Chaudhary had least expected with four AICC(I) heavyweights like M.L. Fotedar, Sheila Kaul, Ratnakar Pande and S.P. Mishra attending the meeting. In fact, Fotedar himself came in for some nasty abuses and Chaudhary had to stop mid-way through this speech as his uproarious opponents would not let him speak. Some 30 rebel MLAs refused to accept the chief minister's dinner invitation. They demanded his ouster as the leader of the party in the state before electioneering for the coming parliamentary polls got under way. With Chaudhary at the helm, the party would come a cropper, they said.

Even the AICC(I) members were not unanimous in backing Chaudhary in the face of a barrage of rebel fire. Sheila Kaul helped increase the dissidents' fire power by demanding that about 500 posts of directors and chairmen of government-controlled boards and corporations, which had been lying vacant for quite some time, be filled up without further delay.

The fracas was obviously the culmination of the growing disgruntlement over the last three years against Chaudhary's rule. The rebels—who include three ministers and 30 MLAs—had made



M.L. Fotedar: under fire

several representations to the Congress(I) high command, demanding the removal of the state's only tribal chief minister, but their requests had been repeatedly turned down.

In April, when the going got really difficult for the chief minister, Fotedar, Kaul and Chintamani Panigrahi arrived at Gandhinagar to give the rebels a hearing. They were supposed to prepare a report for the party president Rajiv Gandhi, giving their views on Chaudhary's removal for the sake of party unity. Fotedar had then refused to make the contents of the report public. "We have given a unanimous report and the result is obvious," he had said ambiguously.

But he confided to a select group of newsmen later that Chaudhary was staying on. But the 15 July meeting must have been a memorable one for Fotedar himself whom people accused of having taken Rs five crores from Chaudhary and showered him with abuses at the airport.

Emboldened by Fotedar's show of support for him at the meeting in which the central leader did not utter a word against Chaudhary, the chief minister told the press on 17 July that he remained the most popular leader, as people approached him to solve the problems they faced in other departments. About 18 Cabinet ministers took offence to this and the Cabinet meeting of 19 July was expected to cut Chaudhary to size. But before the Cabinet met, the chief minister shot off letters of apology to the individual ministers. That won them over and Chaudhary lived to rule another day.

Mahesh Trivedi/Ahmedabad

Deeds and misdeeds

Members of a parish committee go on hunger strike against the decision to lease out church land

ANDHRA PRADESH

The parish committee of the Catholic Association of Hyderabad and the Archbishop of the city have locked horns over the leasing out of a piece of church land. Those who went to attend the Sunday morning mass at St Mary's Church, Secunderabad, on 9 July, found the executive members of the church's parish committee, led by K. Joseph Reddy, on an indefinite hunger strike in a tent they pitched on the church premises.

The parish committee members were protesting against the leasing of 30,312 sq. ft. of church land by the Archbishop, the Rev. Arulappa, to Shalivahana Construction Company (SCC). The plot was a piece of prime land in the heart of Secunderabad valued at about Rs one crore.

But it was not so much the value of the land that piqued the parish committee as the fact that the deal seemed to have hurt the religious sentiments of the Catholics. According to Reddy, there were many irregularities in the deal which raised several questions. Although the stamp-paper on which the deed was made out was purchased on 18 March, 1989, the document did not specify the date on which it was executed by the Archbishop and the company. "It is neither a sale deed nor a lease deed. If anything, it is merely an agreement," said Reddy.

The deed deems the church property to be "belonging to the lessor", to which Reddy objects on the ground that an Archbishop is only the custodian of church property, and not its owner. The deed was signed by two persons—P.L. Lawrence and M. Komaraiah—on behalf of the Shalivahana Construction Company. Reddy pointed out that Lawrence was a close relative of the Archbishop. By having entered into the lease agreement the reverend violated canon 1298 of 'The Code of Canon Law' which governs all Catholic churches in the world. The law lays down that "unless they are of little value, the ecclesiastical goods are not to be sold or leased to the administrators themselves or to their

relatives up to the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity without the special written permission of the competent authority". And the competent authority in a case like this is the Pope himself.

After signing the agreement, SCC served notices on Reddy and other members of the parish committee, asking them to vacate the premises and, in the month of May, it moved in to demolish parts of the church buildings.

A section of the parish committee members allege that the Reverend Arulappa was being misguided and controlled by the parish priest, Fr Julian Studden. Said A. Davies, another member of the parish committee, "Fr Studden was transferred from St Joseph's Cathedral, Gunfoundry, to St Mary's Church in 1986 because of the parishioners' grievances against him." He, apparently, refused to hold elections to the parish council after taking over. Instead, the functionaries were nominated according to the whims of the clergy.

The parish committee decided to go on



The partly demolished premises of St Mary's Church: historic monument

hunger strike when all other means of solving the crisis failed. "We met Archbishop Arulappa several times, but he was reluctant to commit himself to anything. He even said he was unaware of the contents of the deed and directed us to meet Fr Studden," said Reddy.

A marriage on earth

A bizarre ceremony is held to humiliate Harijans in Rajasthan

Some marriages are made in heaven; and some in a police camp. It was a bizarre ceremony organised by the Rajasthan police at Masari village of Kuthumar tehsil in Alwar district. On the morning of 10 July, the police brought Vimla and Omprakash, two Harijans, to a makeshift camp in the village. One of the constables fixed his baton on the ground and the bride and the bridegroom were made to perform the *phera* (ritualistic circumambulation) around the baton instead of a fire as it should be normally done. Once this was over, a police officer declared, "Jao, ho gaye tumhare phere" (Go, your marriage has been solemnised). The couple stood dazed and aghast—a marriage without a pandit, without *mantras* and without a fire was something that they could not conceive of. But the police huddled them into a waiting jeep and it sped off towards the groom's village,

Katara, in Bharatpur district.

So what were the police up to? Well, they were trying to keep the area's caste Hindus happy by arranging this sham ceremony when they should have been providing the Harijans protection in holding a real one.

The Harijans had planned to marry off Vimla and Omprakash in style by bringing out a procession with the bridegroom riding a horse accompanied by a brass band. When the Hindus learnt of this plan, they told the Harijans that they would not allow them to bring out the procession. Finding their plan thus jeopardised, the Harijans approached the chief minister's office, met home minister Ashok Gehlot and sought help from the director general of police (DGP) and even wrote to the Prime Minister. Gehlot and the police department promised the Harijans protection against intimidations by the Hindus and assured them that they



St Mary's Church has an interesting history. Its foundation stone was laid on 15 August, 1847, exactly 100 years before India became independent. So the church should be preserved not only in deference to the sentiments of the Christian community but also as a monument of significance. But, for that, the deeds of the Archbishop may first have to be undone.

Mukundan C. Menon/Hyderabad

Murder most foul

Musician Sajjad Hussain and his son are charged with homicide

WEST BENGAL

A coffin lay on the doorstep. A doctor sat in the living-room writing out a fake death certificate. And veteran *shehnai* player Sajjad Hussain and his son Ali Imam nervously ran around the room trying to wipe out all traces of a crime they had just committed. Eighteen-year-old Rabab Begum, wife of Ali Imam and niece of *shehnai* player Bismillah Khan, had died of tuberculosis, said the death certificate.

Tipped off by the neighbours, police arrived in time to find a still-warm corpse, which bore marks of injury, and on Rabab Begum's bed, tufts of hair and some broken bangles. Ali Imam's young wife had been strangled, said the police. Hitler had used piano wire to string up his disloyal generals; Sajjad Hussain and

his son probably preferred a length of electric wire. Late on the night of 15 July, the couple, married in 1987, had their last confrontation. Rabab Begum probably pleaded with her husband to break off his affair with one of her relatives living in Banaras. Ali Imam, angry that his wife had come to know of the affair, and caught between two women, decided in a fit of anger that his wife would have to go. As Sajjad Hussain later told the police, his son 'had gone out of control'.

The cover up began next morning. Sajjad and his son summoned Asad Ahmed, a doctor, who hurriedly wrote



Sajjad Hussain: attempting a cover-up

out a death certificate. Arrangements were also made for a quick burial. But Sajjad had reckoned without his nosy neighbours. Kept awake the previous night by the angry altercations between Imam and Rabab, they telephoned the police the next morning. Police, who have seized a number of letters written by Imam's mistress to Imam, a missive by Rabab to Imam pleading with him to be a faithful husband and also a length of electric wire, have charged Imam with murder.

But the investigation isn't proceeding as well as it should. Policemen are already complaining that they are being forced to go easy on Dr Asad Ahmed, an associate of a very senior officer of the Calcutta Police. "How can we investigate the case if there is pressure from the highups even before we file a chargesheet," asked a police official. The senior police officer, when asked about his links with Dr Ahmed, admitted that he knew him but denied that he was obstructing justice. But the investigation has only begun: even if Sajjad and his son are guilty, they won't be punished very soon.

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta

had no cause for fear.

But the upper castes were not to be put off so easily. Their belligerence increased when they learnt that the Harijans had sought police protection and were going ahead with their plan. This created a lot of tension in the village.

But the police played truant on the day of the marriage. When the possibilities of their turning up to escort the marriage party receded, the bridegroom's friends and relatives left for the bride's village, Masara, in two groups, with the bridegroom

Home minister Ashok Gehlot and the police department promised the Harijans protection against any attacks by the Hindus. But the police played truant on the day of the marriage ceremony

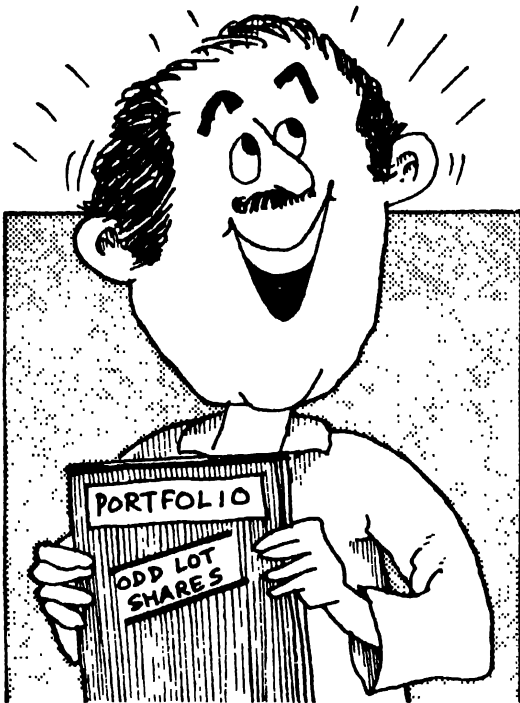
travelling in a tractor. But on the way, the Harijans were attacked by a group of armed men and 12 members of the marriage party suffered serious injuries. The other group, which took a different route, reached Masara, but were petrified to discover a 20,000-strong mob (10,000 according to Gehlot's statement in the state Assembly) waiting to disrupt the function. The collector and the superintendent of police, Alwar district, who were present at the spot, asked the Harijans not to bring out any procession and the mob dispersed only after the Harijans called off the programme.

The police arrived next morning when the battle was lost and won. They took Vimla and Omprakash away and forced them to perform a farcical ritual they had planned for the distraught couple. And though the incident created a furore in the Assembly after it was reported in a local newspaper, leading to the suspension of senior district police officials and an administrative inquiry being ordered into the matter, the Harijans are yet to get over the humiliation they suffered.

Millap Chand Dandia/Jalpur

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Reading between the lines

A circular issued by the state's chief electoral officer threatens to rob the minorities of their voting rights

ASSAM

A circular sent out by the state's chief electoral officer is creating bad blood between various communities by treating the 1966 electoral roll as the cut-off document for preparing the voters' list for the coming parliamentary elections. The linguistic minorities are opposing the move, fearing that lakhs among them would be disenfranchised, and their growing sullenness does not augur well for the state's fragile ethnic relations.

The first outburst against the circular occurred on 29 June when about 1,000 students belonging to the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AMSU) went on the rampage while trying to force a *bandh* in Nagaon district in protest against the electoral move. The police resorted to firing at Sonabali, about 25 km away from Nagaon town, killing four students as the AMSU activists went about burning trucks that were plied in defiance of the *bandh* call. Subsequently, two more *bandhs* were organised in Nagaon and in the Bengali-dominated Barak Valley, widening the psychological chasm that tends to separate it from upper Assam where Assamese are in the majority. Said Golam Osmani, a former minister and leader of the United Minorities Front (UMF): "It would be difficult for them (the minorities) to set up links either on their town or through their parentage with the 1966 rolls." And this, he fears, would rob thousands of their voting rights.

The controversy was sparked off by a three-page telex message sent out by the chief electoral officer, Bhaskar Barua, on 20 May to all deputy commissioners and electoral officers. He wanted them to prepare two lists before drafting the new electoral roll—one on the basis

of names of persons appearing in the 1985 roll and another of those whose names cannot be linked to the 1966 list. It meant that if someone's or his or her parent's name did not appear in the 1966 list, the person was liable to be disenfranchised.

But says Karendu Bhattacharya, a Congress(I) MLA from Cachar, "We will not allow the holding of the Lok Sabha polls if the revisions in the voters' list is carried out on the basis of the 1966

Home minister Bhriugu Phukan, who refuses to go into the technicalities involved in the revision of the voters' list accuses the Centre of whipping up communal passions in a bid to impose President's rule in the state

Golam Osmani: speaking up for the minorities



rolls," while Santi Ranjan Dasgupta, UMF president, who met Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 1 July, feared that 80 lakh voters belonging to the minority communities would lose their voting rights as a result of this circular.

The Cachar district president of the UMF wondered how the 1985 rolls could lose their validity when they served as the basis for the last Assembly polls. Union minister of state for home Santosh Mohan Dev was also peeved by the circular, as this ministry, on the basis of a report submitted by the attorney general of the state, K. Parasaran, had recommended that the 1985 rolls should serve as the basis of the Lok Sabha polls in the state.

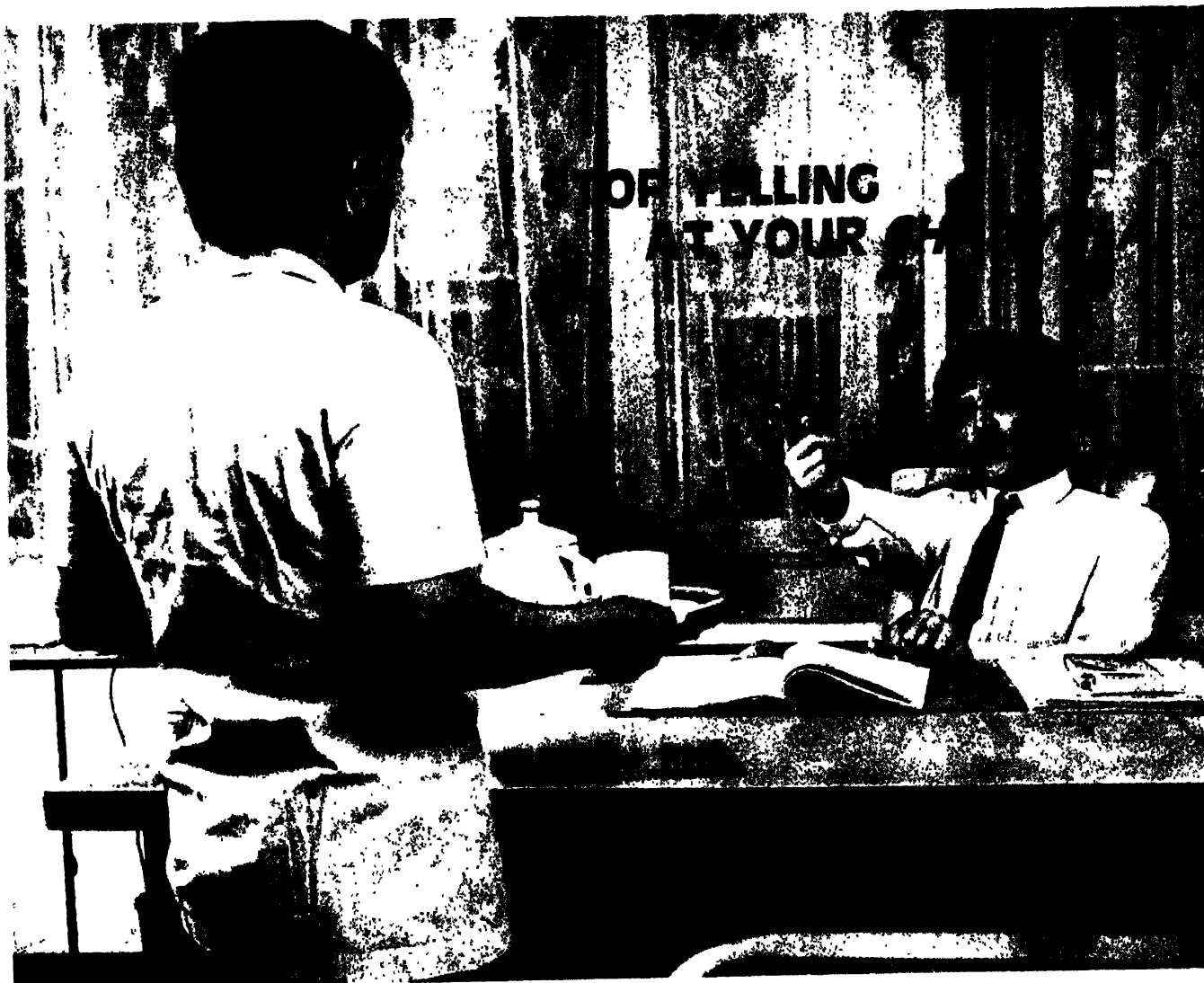
Chief minister Prafulla Mahanta, however, dismisses the apprehensions as unfounded and asserts that the 20-May directive was in keeping with the Citizenship Amendment Act of 1985, which lays down that only people of Indian origin who came to Assam on or before 1 January 1966 would be deemed to be citizens of India. "How can we allow non-citizens to remain on the voters' list?" he asks.

But the Congress(I) and the Congress(S), parties that enjoy a considerable following among the minorities, have not bought Mahanta's arguments.

Said Hiteswar Saikia, a former Congress(I) chief minister, the circular ran counter to clause 7 of the 25 March guidelines laid down by the Election Commission which cautioned against disenfranchising persons simply because their or the names of their parents did not appear in the list of 1966

State home minister Bhriugu Phukan, who refuses to go into the technicalities involved, accuses the Congress(I) of whipping up communal passions in a bid to impose President's Rule in the state. The AGP (Assam Gana Parishad) government, which has been doing the balancing act for sometime past, succeeded in mollifying the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) activists who have been insisting on using the 1966 rolls in preparing future voters' lists, but has managed to antagonise the minorities and create new uncertainties in the state.

Santanu Ghosh/Silchar



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Publish and perish?

The recent massive hikes in paper prices threaten the future of the publishing industry

At the best of times, Indian publishers are a disgruntled lot. But they have never been worse off than they are now. Hikes in paper prices have never been so alarming or imposed in such quick succession. In 1988, the price of paper was revised seven times. This year, there have been three significant increases already, making it 40-50 per cent more expensive than it was seven months ago. "This is the first time in my career of 20 years that I have witnessed such continuous increases," says Rajan Mehra of Rupa and Company. "We know that paper prices go up just before the elections and we expect more increases before the end of this year. But we can't understand why the situation has gone so out of hand since December last."

While the rising cost of newsprint has forced the Bombay-based *Free Press Journal* and two Kerala dailies to close down, publishing houses are keeping their heads above water by passing on the burden of additional costs to the consumer. This has affected sales: especially of those publishers who depend on individual rather than institutional buying. Though most publishers agree that escalating paper costs eventually undermine the reading habit (which is endangered by the electronic media) and erode their profits, they are divided on whether the industry is facing a crisis.

"Since 50 per cent of our production costs are paper costs, you can imagine the impact of the price hikes on the industry," says Sanjit Datta of Penguin Books India. "The overall market reaction has meant a decrease in sales and we have to be more cautious in our print runs, and much more judicious about what we print." "The risk element is much greater in the business today, says Gulab Vazirani president of the Federation of Indian Publishers. "We have been thrown out of gear and have never faced such a bad period. The cost of paper has jumped by 150 per cent in the

last three years, and unless there is some change, the industry—sorry, publishing is not recognised as an industry yet—will die out. With this kind of raw material cost, nobody can do business. Publishers are a damned lot."

Rukun Advani, senior editor at Oxford University Press, disagrees. "There is no crisis situation," he says. "If the escalation had gone on, there might have been a crisis, but prices have steadied a bit, even gone down in recent weeks, for some kinds of paper." Tejeshwar Singh of Sage Publications is even more sceptical about the hue and cry being raised by publishers. "The word crisis is

a red rag for me," he says. "If there is a crisis, it is entirely self-made, and publishers have wallowed in it, begging for more concessions. I have been hearing that there is a crisis situation since 1978. If the situation was so bad, would Penguin have thought of actually opening an office in India? The rest of the world is looking at India with open mouths and licking their chops. We're sitting on a gold mine. If only they'd realise it instead of cribbing."

Are publishers then crying wolf? Are they making the government a scapegoat when they have only themselves to blame if business is bad? Nobody can deny that more expensive paper means less people are able to buy books. But while the press sees the paper hike as part of a sinister design to thwart free thought and curb political comment, most publishers are more concerned about its immediate economic implications.

What makes matters worse is that paper manufacturers operate in a totally protected environment. Paper cannot be imported except by the government's Hindustan Paper Corporation. And ironically enough it is the government who is the worst affected, being the largest consumer of paper: approximately 80 per cent of the average white paper is used by government offices.

Besides, the government also controls the production of textbooks for primary schools. In an election year, its demand for paper is staggering. So, in relative terms, the publishing industry uses a negligible amount of paper. "It is the government that is paying out more money. Unfortunately, we people in the private sector get squeezed in the bargain," says Singh. "Publishers can keep complaining but why should they care?"

Others feel that the hike has far more disturbing implications. Addressing a seminar on the rising cost of paper in New Delhi, Professor Rajni Kothari

There is still a market for books: fiction is the best seller



While the press sees the paper hike as part of a sinister design to thwart free thought and curb political comment, most publishers are more concerned about its economic implications

said: "The price of paper affects the freedom of a citizen." There are many theories as to why, while prices of paper are falling world-wide, paper costs are going up so dramatically in India. The press perceives this as part of a diabolic scheme to stifle the voice of the press and prevent the publication of more books. "This hike is not merely economic, but political as well," says Nikhil Chakravarty, editor of *Mainstream*. "It is an insecure regime's attempt to thwart the enlightenment of the public. After all that ballyhoo about literacy and the new education policy, the government's sinister priorities are now evident." Dileep Padgaonkar, editor of *The Times of India*, maintained that the price hike "demonstrates the sustained and relentless animosity of the government toward the written word"

Though the paper price hike has hit most publishers, they remain disunited. And this gives the government an upper hand. "The publishers did take joint recourse to demonstrate against the hike and even observed an all-India Protest Day in February. But whenever they have approached the ministry, they have been quarrelling amongst themselves, with different factions presenting different demands," avers an official in the commerce ministry. "And anyway," defends the official, "this is a question of administration of prices, not of curtailing freedom. There has been an abnormal increase in the price of all raw materials: coal is in short supply, power cuts are frequent, and there is a shortage of pulp."

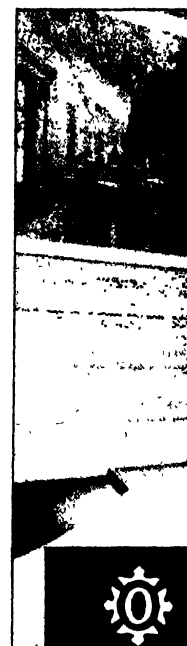
The situation could be saved, though, say most publishers. Rajan Mehra, for one, maintains: "These abnormal increases could be controlled if there was a paper control order like the one the government had introduced some years ago, and if paper was imported to tide over the crisis." There is a precedent for this. When, in 1974, paper prices got out of hand, shooting up from Rs 5 to Rs 8 per tonne (present increases have made paper go up from Rs 11-13 to Rs 22 per tonne), the government imported paper from all over the world to control prices. "Whatever the foreign exchange costs, this will have to be done as a short-term measure," says Mehra. "We spend Rs 300 crores annually on the import of books. So why can't the government rationalise imports and buy paper on the international market instead?" asks Vazirani. Adding, with some feeling, "We have slipped from 7th to 17th place in the world production of books."

"This is not the first time publishing



RUPA AND COMPANY

RAJAN MEHRA: *This is the first time in my career of 20 years that I have witnessed such continuous increases*



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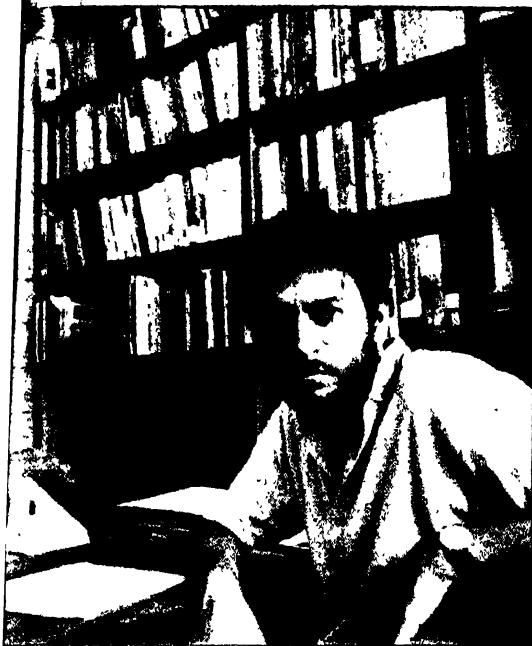
has been in trouble," claims Mohan Gupta of Raj Kamal Prakashan, which has a near monopoly of quality books in Hindi. "On the one hand, the government announces Operation Blackboard, and allots crores and crores for books for children, and on the other, it makes it almost impossible for adults to buy books. So what will be the outcome of all this talk of literacy?" The book weeks and book fairs organised by the government are only rituals, he says, because with the increase in prices, very few people are able to buy books. "If the government really wants to, they can control prices," says Gupta. "Overnight, the price of black and white television fell by Rs 1,000 when Mrs Gandhi launched her television blitz."

Even where the publishing industry is concerned, there have been instances of relief from the government. In 1972, publishers were bailed out of a difficult situation by a 20 per cent tax relief. In 1987, textbook paper was made available at concessional rates. Also, since most publishers use direct mail system in the absence of a proper sales network in small towns, concessional postal rates would greatly help. "We have to spend Rs 8 as postage for a book priced at Rs 15," claims Gupta. "If the government implemented such measures, it would help. But obviously books are not on their list of priorities."

The current crisis has meant that most publishers have tightened their

belts. Some have even turned down manuscripts that they might otherwise have accepted. While no publisher is able to produce concrete figures to show an actual drop in registered sales this year, there is likely to be a slump of about 20 per cent. "It is a question of carefully balancing our budgets to maintain some sort of equilibrium," explains Sanjit Datta of Penguin India. "Different publishers use different methods to overcome the extra cost of paper," says Advani. At OUP, for instance, print orders may be decreased and a book reprinted later to accommodate costs. With this method, though, cost per unit shoots up, and so the smaller publishers have to increase their cover prices.

With the pound getting dearer by the minute, imported books have all but gone out of the reach of the average person. Indians are not avid readers, though there is a section of people, mostly the affluent, which buys books despite the inflated prices. The demand is generally restricted to pulp and at times to classics, and pirates do brisk business, offsetting books and selling them on footpaths at a fraction of the original cost. OUP's Concise Oxford Dictionary has been pirated, as has *All My Sons*, a prescribed textbook. "This happens when our print runs exceed 8,000 to 10,000 copies, especially for prescribed texts," explains Advani. "It is almost impossible to prosecute the pirates themselves, but we physically seize whatever copies we can find."



RUKUN ADVANI: *There is no crisis situation. If the escalation had gone on, there might have been a crisis, but prices have steadied a bit.*



'PENGUIN BOOKS INDIA

SANJIT DATTA: *Since 50 per cent of our production costs are paper costs, you can imagine the impact of the price hikes on the industry.*

Piracy doesn't affect our business too much. The loss is not massive, but it's something one doesn't want to ignore."

According to Mehra, if books are priced reasonably, piracy is less likely to occur. "The laws are quite stringent, and people wouldn't resort to buying pirated copies if they got the original editions at the proper prices." But there's no denying that overpricing exists. While nobody can deny that Indian publishing, especially the more reputed houses, is improving in terms of quality, production and design, the tendency to pass on the burden of increased costs to the buyer has to be decried.

Not that publishers are out and out losers. Despite the increase in paper costs, publishers like OUP have registered a steady growth in turnover—about 10-12 per cent—even over the last year. "About 80 per cent of our sales are to the government and other institutional buyers. There has been no cut in institutional buying, and trade has been very brisk. It's when the government cuts back on spending that we feel the pinch, like six or seven years ago, when they froze library buying." In fact, OUP is one publishing house that has benefited greatly from the Nehru and Radhakrishna centenary celebrations, with books by these statesmen being much in demand. "It's been wonderful for us," smiles Advani, admitting though, that individual-oriented publishers might be worse affected.

Publishing in the vernacular languages isn't a paying proposition either. Says Gupta of Raj Kamal Prakashan: "Unlike the English reader, our clients come from the Hindi belt where the economic situation is not so good, and our prices reflect this. For instance, *Tamas* in English (Penguin) costs Rs 55, while the original Hindi edition brought out by us is only Rs 15." Raj Kamal's sales have registered a decrease of 10 to 20 per cent but Gupta insists that he's in the business for better or for worse.

Other publishers have found novel ways to surmount the situation. Mehra,

for instance, negotiated special prices with foreign publishers, and offers a host of excellent books from such publishers as Fontana, Pan, Picador, Crafston at almost 50-60 per cent of the published price abroad. "This has created a lot of demand for books that were otherwise out of the reach of many people," says Mehra, who swears by publishing as a profession. "There are opportunities for spinning money, and it is still a very lucrative business, if you work out the economics well and price your books properly. It is not a business which yields profits overnight, but it can be cultivated," says Mehra, a third-generation publisher. The reading habit is being rapidly eroded by the advent of video and television, he maintains. Despite that, "fiction is still the best seller, the lighter the better. Poetry is out, but general travelogues are now doing well."

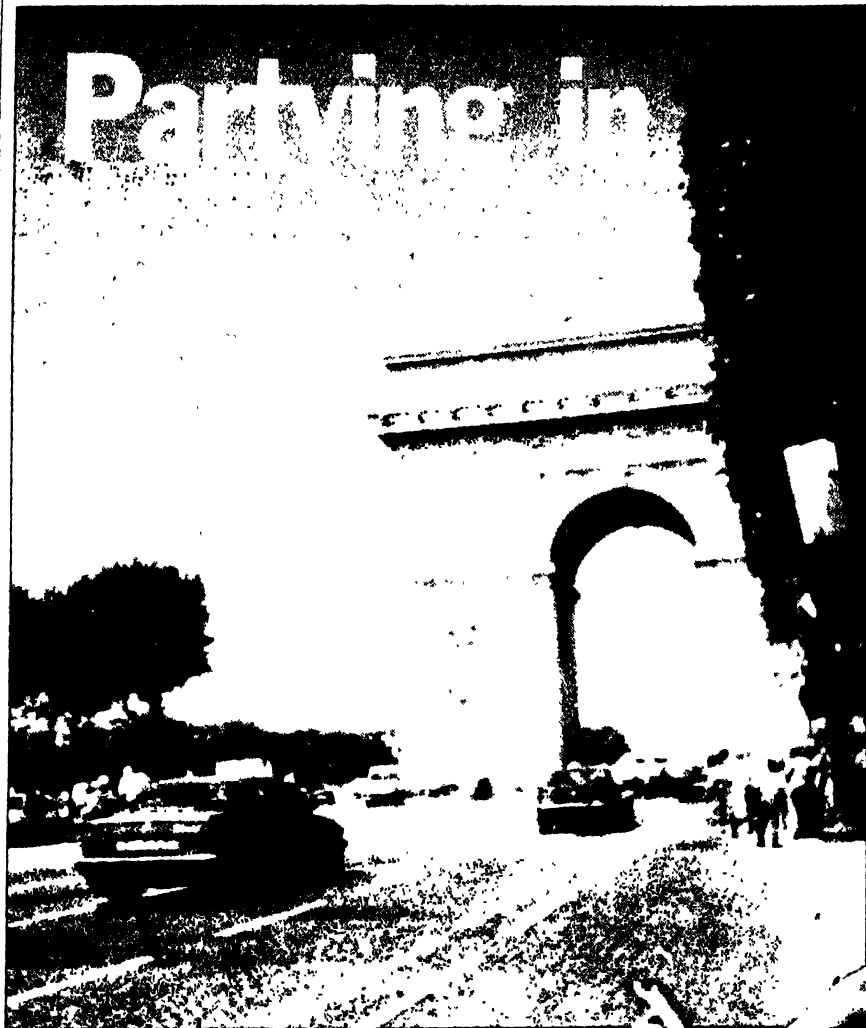
Tejeshwar Singh, who started Sage eight years ago, after putting in a decade at Macmillan's, calls publishing a "dicey, fascinating business. We are the entrepreneurs between those who have something to say and those who want to read it, and we are committed to being part of a wider process."

And there still is a market for books, even though your average college student may believe that it's idiotic to buy a book for Rs 50, when you can get a video cassette for home viewing at Rs 10.

Shiraz Siddhvi/New Delhi



The reading habit is being rapidly eroded by the advent of video and television. "But publishing is still a very lucrative business," maintains Mehra of Rupa and Company



The French bicentennial celebrations are marred by the controversy arising out of the differential treatment meted out to Third World countries

Paris was all dressed up for the show. The Bastille Column, the Invalides, the futuristic pyramid at the Louvre gleamed proudly as France geared up to celebrate the 200th birthday of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Flowers in the colours of the French flag bloomed along fashionable Paris boulevards and the Champs Elysee was a riot of ribbons, bouquets, flags and souvenir-sellers in red sansculotte caps, flouncy period skirts and bonnets.

Only, this time round it wasn't the Parisians who were going to storm the Bastille. It were four million tourists, 30,000 policemen and soldiers, 6,500 journalists and 30 heads of state and government with their entourages who had invaded Paris to take part in the

festivities. From the Indian subcontinent came Rajiv Gandhi, Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto and Bangladesh President H.M. Ershad.

But even as the state guests were escorted into the city under heavy security, the locals fled their city, seeking shelter in the countryside to avoid the rush. And, ironically, even 200 years after the slogans of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' had brought down the Bourbon regime, the group of seven rich countries ate the cake at the celebrations, while the poor cousins begged for their bread.

In what soon became the most controversial aspect of the festivities, French President Francois Mitterand dined with the leaders of the seven rich nations at the Hotel De La Marine,

overlooking the Place De La Concorde on the night of 14 July, while the poorer countries dined separately at the Hotel de Crillon next door, hosted by Mrs Mitterand and Prime Minister Michel Rocard.

Mitterand's move to hold the bicentenary celebrations along with the G-7 Summit horrified many. French pop singer Renaud—otherwise a Mitterand fan—proclaimed: "The third estate of today is the Third World," a slogan that caught on immediately, and prompted an embarrassed Mitterand to talk about forgiving debts to the Third World.

The critics of the celebration were quick to organise a counter-show. A parallel festival was held, culminating in a free concert at the Bastille on 15 July. An unofficial summit of the world's



Shobana Jeyasingh:
combining the East
and the West

poorest countries—The Other Economic Summit (TOES-89)—was attended by activists from Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Zaire, Haiti, Brazil, Bangladesh, and Philippines. A declaration challenged the rich countries: "We refuse the seven the right to speak alone in the name of the entire world and to decide for the whole of humanity."

Third World leaders took their own initiatives. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, along with the leaders of Senegal, Egypt and Venezuela called upon Mitterand to organise another North-South Summit, inviting the Soviet Union and China too, if possible. Though the initial idea came from Venezuela, India played a major role in coordinating the proposal. "The leaders of the rich countries ought to reflect upon what set off the French Revolution—famine—and apply that to the situation today," Rajiv Gandhi told Mitterand.

Mitterand assured the leaders that he would begin on the necessary preparations. But whether he will manage to get British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President George Bush to attend is another matter. Both Bush and Thatcher are opposed to a North-South Summit and think questions of international debt should be left to such bodies as the World Bank. The last North-South Summit was held in Cancun, Mexico, one year before the Third World debt crisis erupted.

However, the call for debt reduction from such countries as Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Uruguay did pressure the seven rich countries when they met in the Louvre. They pledged to strengthen Third World debt strategy, and banks were asked to adopt a constructive approach in talks.

Rajiv Gandhi met Mrs Thatcher over breakfast where the Iron Lady reaffirmed her commitment to dealing firmly with Indian terrorists based on British soil, and spoke of her personal interest in the on-going Jawaharlal Nehru centenary celebrations in Britain.

The way Mitterand had foreseen it, the anniversary party would be a golden opportunity for diplomacy. The presence of the poor countries would force the G-7 to make concessions, and the interaction of 30 heads of government would lead to much bonhomie and good cheer. It didn't quite work out like that, though. Margaret Thatcher told French television that France wasn't the first to speak about democracy, and the French media immediately screamed for her neck.

Leaving aside such political embarrassment, the show went off without any

major disasters. The four million people pressing in on the Champs Elysee to get a glimpse of the grand parade on 14 July may not have seen much and heard little, but there were no accidents. The surveillance airship which floated over the crowds, the cordoned roads, the strict vigil may have left several people unhappy, but the 30 leaders and the press saw a march that few will forget.

Jean Paul Goude was chosen to choreograph the Bastille Day march, and promised to provide sensational fare. He kept his word. The sight of Chinese students on bicycles and wearing black headbands was overwhelming as was what followed later. French surrealism combined with the mystic East and moonwalking West to bring rain, fog, snow and a steam engine to the Elysee.

The British contingent brought with it a breath of India, as dancers dressed in Bharatnatyam gear danced along, to the song: *Yeh azaadi ka din hai*, and the beat of drums. Two elephants representing the links between India and Britain walked along with the dancers. A London fire engine team recreated the famous British rain, directing their hose pipes at the dancing girls and elephants.

Britain-based dancer Shobana Jeyasingh, who choreographed the dance, has worked on combining Indian dance steps with western classical music, and the French obviously loved the bizarre sequence.

With the Soviet Union came a steam engine, chugging up the Champs Elysee in a *Doctor Zhivago*-like sequence. The fire engines now created a snow storm



Rajiv Gandhi with Prime Minister Michel Rocard: building good relations

**French President
François Mitterand
dined with the leaders
of the seven rich
nations while the
poorer countries
dined separately**



effect. African drummers came in a human pyramid and the US contingent moonwalked in with Michael Jackson-type steps.

The parade lasted late into the night and the crowds on the Champs Elysee did everything humanly possible to get a view—from rigging up home-made periscopes to climbing step-ladders along the trees. Every vantage point, even telephone kiosks and trees, were utilised to the full. It was sheer chaos as everyone tried to get a look-in.

As a student put it, "It's a miracle, we survived *this* revolution." As the last of the delegates, the tourists and journalists departed, most Parisians heaved a sigh of relief. The party over, the hangover was now their problem.

Shrabani Basu/Paris

Ruling through a kitchen cabinet

After the Congress split in 1969, Indira Gandhi increasingly bypassed the cabinet and tended to rely more on handpicked bureaucrat-advisers

Mrs Gandhi's tenure falls into three or four parts. The period of 15 months between her assumption of office in early 1966 to March 1967 was in the nature of probation. The next period—very eventful—extended from the fourth general election held in 1967 to the Congress split. The results of these elections were bad for the Congress. In several states the Congress was defeated; and in three

more states the defection game which the Congress had been playing for nearly three decades to weaken the Opposition boomeranged on it. In the second phase the internal Congress conflict became aggravated and the Congress broke up, reducing it to a minority in the Lok Sabha in 1969. After 1971 began the era of Mrs Gandhi's personal supremacy which ended with her assassination on 31 October, 1984, with the brief Janata interlude of two and half years, from March 1977 to July 1979 when Morarji

Desai resigned.

In the first phase Mrs Gandhi inherited a huge two-thirds majority. She did not change materially the composition of the cabinet Shastri had left behind him. In the second phase the Congress had, by Indian parliamentary standards, "slim" majority of around 40. She had some ministers imposed upon her, notably Morarji, whom she had to designate as deputy Prime Minister in addition to giving him finance. (She, however, refused to divest Y.B. Chavan, her staunch supporter, of home.) It was during this phase that acute differences arose over the selection of the candidate for the post of President



Indira Gandhi with Morarji Desai: their differences

of the Republic. Mrs Gandhi treated it as a challenge to her authority as Prime Minister. She resolved to assert herself. On 16 July, 1969, Morarji Desai was dismissed. Desai received the Prime Minister's letter relieving him of the finance portfolio at 12.30 pm. At 1.30 pm, the news was officially announced. Thereupon Morarji resigned as deputy Prime Minister.

On 19 July, 1969, after the CPP meeting, Mrs Gandhi accepted Morarji's resignation and the same night an Ordinance nationalising 14 commercial banks was promulgated. On 20 August V.V. Giri was elected President, with the combined support of the Left parties, including both the SSP and PSP, and Indira Gandhi, defeating Sanjiv Reddy, the official Congress candidate who was supported by the Swatantra Party and the Jan Sangh. On 13 November, 1969, the Congress formally split when Mrs Gandhi was expelled by the Working Committee by a majority of one. On 16 November, 1969, Morarji was elected chairman of what came to be known as the Congress(O) Parliamentary Party.

During the monsoon session of Parliament in 1966 the fortunes of the Congress party were at their lowest ebb. The minister who was buffeted the most on the issue of the Steel Barter Deal was C. Subramaniam.

When the debate on the Steel Barter





ok the Congress

Deal was at its height, Mrs Gandhi sent a word to me through R.K. Khadilkar, a leftist Congressman from Maharashtra and former member of the Congress Socialist party, that she would like to see me. Khadilkar took me to her residence. After a few minutes, Khadilkar left. Mrs Gandhi exuded warmth. She asked me about the controversial barter deal. I explained the position to her. She asked me what I wanted her to do. I told her that I wanted an impartial judicial commission to probe the matter and the resignation of C. Subramaniam, pending clearance by the commission.

"I am prepared to appoint a commission," she said unleashing her full charm. "But why do you want the minister's prior resignation?"

I said: "Enough evidence has been brought out about his involvement and so he has to go."

Mrs Gandhi said: "But Krishnamachari resigned only after the commission's report was published."

I said: "The two cases are not comparable. Here the Publics Accounts Committee (PAC) has *prima facie* passed a

censure against him. It has accused him of not telling the truth." I then went on to say that apart from collective responsibility of the whole cabinet, there was individual responsibility of ministers for actions of their departments.

The Prime Minister seemed slightly irritated. She said that "the PAC chairman Morarka is a biased man." After saying this she fell silent and started doodling. I rose and terminated the conversation.

There was no love lost between C. Subramaniam, one-time protege of Rajaji, and Kamaraj, Rajaji's arch enemy. Rajaji in a picturesque phrase had called him "six feet of poison." Whenever I met Kamaraj in the Central Hall or outside thereafter, he spoke to me warmly and did not conceal his delight at the discomfiture of C. Subramaniam at my hands.

G.L. Nanda was the "second man" in Mrs Gandhi's cabinet. He was second in terms of the pecking order, not in terms of influence, and held the important

Luckily for Mrs Gandhi, the power of the Syndicate was broken by the 1967 elections...Kamaraj was beaten by an unknown candidate. And in 1969, she differed with Morarji Desai on the bank nationalisation issue and divested him of the finance portfolio

With Kamaraj: power of the Syndicate



home portfolio. Nanda was not competent and was clearly unfit to run this important ministry. After the riots that broke out during the *sadhus* anti-cow slaughter demonstration in Delhi, his position became untenable. There was a widespread demand in the party that he be replaced. S.K. Patil, the Bombay Congress boss, coveted the job once handled by such great men as Vallabh-bhai, Rajaji and Govind Ballabh Pant. But Mrs Gandhi did not trust him. She gave the job to the influential Y.B. Chavan, former chief minister of Maharashtra.

It was part of her plan to reduce the stranglehold of the Syndicate leaders.

Luckily for her, the power of the Syndicate was broken by the elections held in 1967. S.K. Patil was defeated by George Fernandes. Atulya Ghosh also lost. Kamaraj himself was beaten by an unknown young DMK candidate. But this was not the only effect of the elections. The majority of the Congress in Parliament too was reduced. Mrs Gandhi was forced to proceed slowly. She could not assert her position immediately. She was compelled to rule by consensus, at least for the time being. There were many competent ministers. The clout of Y.B. Chavan and Morarji Desai was quite considerable. C. Subramaniam had been defeated. But there was the experienced Jagjivan Ram.

It was in this second period that the term kitchen cabinet came into vogue. But in 1967-68 it did not wield much influence. But its role became crucial in 1969. The brief period of the first two years of the fourth Lok Sabha was a unique experience. There was no parallel to the situation in the previous 15-year period; nor would the experience be repeated in the two decades that followed these interesting years.

In the Nehru era M.O. Mathai, his personal assistant, was very powerful. Ministers paid homage to him. So arrogant

was he that except for a few senior ministers he would not get up from his seat to welcome them. There was a persistent hostility against him and when a scandal broke out he was removed.

In Jawaharlal's time the Prime Minister's personal office was a small affair. Some 12 gazetted officers had been drafted to help him. The total staff including peons, clerks and typists did not exceed 150. The number of Lal Bahadur Shastri's secretariat staff was nearly

200. Instead of his cabinet minister Shastri relied more on his personal staff. L.K. Jha was the chief. But being an old type bureaucrat he did not encroach much on the field of cabinet secretary. Even so cabinet secretary Dharma Vira did not approve of the new trend.

Mrs Gandhi continued the Shastri tradition and retained L.K. Jha for some time. But he was not a man after her heart. The first to fall from grace was Asoka Mehta during the fourth Lok Sabha. He was about to be dropped in 1968. So he made the differences over the Soviet armed intervention in Czechoslovakia an issue and resigned. Having doggedly pursued for 10 years the line of cooperation with Nehru and Indira in the interests of socialism, he ultimately found himself in the company of the Congress(O) leaders.

Among Mrs Gandhi's joint secretaries were Sushital Banerjee, Natwar Singh and Bishan Tandon. Sushital was the best of them all. He was friendly and we often chatted in the Central Hall. He gave me some insight into the structure and functioning of the secretariat. Later on he was transferred elsewhere. The Haksar era had begun.

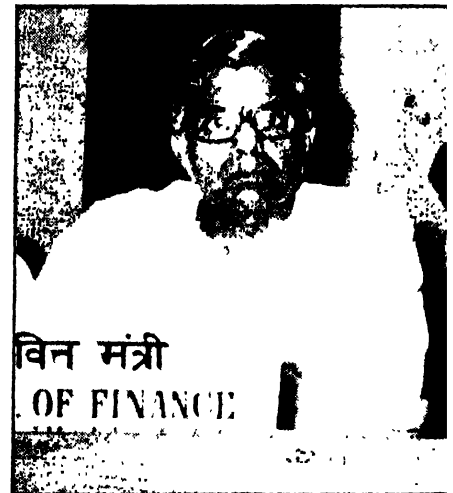
In the struggle to tighten her grip over the government, Mrs Gandhi reorganised the Prime Minister's Secretariat. P.N. Haksar, a lawyer from Allahabad, who was then in the Foreign Service, was drafted by Mrs Gandhi as her principal secretary, and it is from this point on that the character of the Prime Minister's Secretariat underwent a revolutionary change.

P.N. Haksar was a Marxist; he did not really believe in parliamentary democracy nor did he have any respect for democratic values. Under him the cabinet ministers were downgraded—Haksar had contempt for them—and the autonomy of the governments was destroyed, the cabinet secretariat became a cipher, the concept of the neutrality of civil service was attacked, and the independence of the judges was undermined. The Prime Minister's Secretariat became a parallel government. Gradually the old "kitchen cabinet" people like Dinesh Singh, and Inder Gujaral lost their ephemeral power and glory.

Mrs Gandhi's victory in 1971 further demoralised her opponents and intimidated her colleagues... Whenever Mrs Gandhi sought Y.B. Chavan's or Jagjivan Ram's advice, they were extremely reticent

The nationalisation proposal had been discussed by the Congress Working Committee in May 1967. Opposing the proposal Morarji Desai, then deputy Prime Minister and finance minister, put forward a scheme of social control. A few members were sceptical. But the committee by and large endorsed the Desai line. The matter was further considered by the cabinet. Most members of the cabinet were in favour of nationalisation of a few banks. But Morarji forcefully shot it down. Desai's social control was finally accepted by the AICC at Jabalpur in 1968. At this stage it was Kamaraj who was an ardent champion of nationalisation. Mrs Gandhi kept a low profile.

After Zakir Husain's death, the question of Sanjiva Reddy with Indira Gandhi: a scapegoat



(Clockwise from top left) Asoka Mehta: first to fall from grace; Mrs Gandhi with Y.B. Chavan: intimidated; with Jagjivan Ram: caving in; and with C. Subramaniam: sidelined

tion of presidential candidate became highly controversial. The Syndicate, Desai and Chavan tried to force their candidate—Sanjiva Reddy—on Mrs Gandhi. This she resented. As a diversion, she sent her "stray thoughts" to the Working Committee through Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad. Patil and Morarji opposed her "radical suggestions". But Kamaraj was



averse to joining issue with Mrs Gandhi on these questions. Y.B. Chavan, too, was nervous. Unlike Desai and Patil, they both were in favour of bank nationalisation. A compromise was worked out at the Bangalore AICC (July 1969) on the policy issues raised by Indira Gandhi. But this did not work.

In an unprecedented exercise of her awesome prime ministerial power she divested Desai of his finance portfolio without prior consultation and warning. Desai was no ordinary colleague. His ouster shook the Congress. The Congress presidential nominee's defeat was engineered by Mrs Gandhi herself. Still, large numbers of Congress members feared a split. Many well-wishers also advised against a break. But the inevitable hap-

pened in November 1969. Mrs Gandhi's government became a minority government. But the Congress ranks, by and large, were with her. So was the public opinion. Anyway it growingly turned in her favour.

The Congress split destroyed the cabinet balance. Mrs Gandhi had made Morarji an example. All cabinet mem-

bers were cowed down. Who could oppose her will or insist on offering unpalatable advice? Morarji was the last of the series of such advisers, from Patel through Rajaji and Azad to Pant. 1969 was indeed a watershed year. The cabinet system originated in the year 1937-39. It flowered into a developed institution during the Nehru era. It struggled for survival during the Shastri interlude and the early years of Indira Gandhi's first tenure. In 1969 its rapid decline began. It was quite precipitate. It has been limping these last 20 years.

Mrs Gandhi's spectacular victory in the 1971 Lok Sabha further demoralised her opponents and intimidated her colleagues. Jagjivan Ram was told to choose between party presidentship or cabinet membership. He could not retain both. He chose the latter. The office of the Congress president lost its importance. The cabinet consultation became desultory. Some editors and MPs told me that it was not only Mrs Gandhi's wilfulness that was responsible for this state of affairs. Her colleagues were also to blame. Whenever Mrs Gandhi sought Y.B. Chavan's or Jagjivan Ram's advice, they were extremely reticent. "You know best," they would say in a docile manner. There was now no Patel or Rajaji or Azad or Pant or Morarji in the cabinet.

The death of Kumaramangalam and D.P. Dhar coincided with a change in Mrs Gandhi's outlook. For a few years prior to this she had leaned on the bogus left, but the economic crisis forced her to turn to Uma Shankar Dixit and C. Subramaniam. C. Subramaniam took over as the finance minister. CS favoured liberalisation of the economy and relaxation of controls. To counter the Congress Socialist Forum, Dixit blessed the Nehru Forum. Ultimately, Mrs Gandhi dismantled both the forums. "No discussion" became the new rule. Sanjay Gandhi gradually began to de-

velop political interest and a strong supporter of capitalist enterprise. The country was faced with failure of monsoon, scarcity, inflation and rising government expenditure. It was against this background that CS executed a reorientation of economic policy. The change was definitely in the direction of deregulation and decontrol of the economy and tax reliefs to the rich and the powerful.

P.N. Haksar(left) and L.K.Jha: bureaucrat-advisers



The "liberalisation" of the controlled economy was not paralleled by political liberalisation. The political management continued to be authoritarian. The outbreak of mass movements in Gujarat and Bihar hardened Mrs Gandhi's heart. She felt she was in a state of siege. The election petition filed by Raj Narain obsessed her. The election law was amended. Nevertheless, the sense of insecurity grew.



With Sanjay Gandhi: authoritarian rule

Haksar took obvious delight in the devaluation of the Congress politicians at the Centre and in the states. His ego found satisfaction in the denigration and humiliation of chief ministers and other ministers. The consequences for federalism and democracy were fearful. Haksar repudiated and violated the basic principles governing the functioning of cabinet government which has been expounded in this note of the cabinet secretariat:

The business of the government is transacted in accordance with the Transaction of Business Rules and the Allocation of Business Rules, both of which have been promulgated

under Article 77 of the Constitution. The Allocation of Business Rules provide that the business of the government shall be transacted in the ministries, departments, secretariat and offices specified in the First Schedule to these rules.

The distribution of subjects among the departments is specified in the Second Schedule to these rules. *While the President can, on the advice of the Prime Minister, change the allocation of business between departments, nothing in the rules seems to provide for the Prime Minister's Secretariat transacting any business allotted to a particular ministry.*

Notwithstanding this, Haksar virtually ran a parallel government from the PMS. However, it is true that this phase of the Haksar ascendancy did not last. But during the years he directed policy from his office, the cabinet, the state government, the government department, the Congress Working Committee and Central Parliamentary Board all lost their lustre. The Congress Parliamentary Party itself became a lifeless corpse.

Only Parliament now remained as a valuable forum of free discussion thanks to the vigilance of some of the Opposition members. Mrs Gandhi's unease therefore did not abate. Her dislike of Parliament became intense. The continuing exposure of the Maruti scandal, the highlighting of Lalit Narain Mishra's murky Pondicherry Licence Case, the

Supreme Court's decision in the Chawla election petition, the hearings in the Raj Narain-Indira Gandhi election petition before the Allahabad High Court did nothing to reduce Mrs Gandhi's nervousness and insecurity. The crisis that was simmering would soon boil and explode, and all institutions would be given a body blow by the proclamation of Emergency. A new factor led to the departure of P.N. Haksar as Mrs Gandhi's principal adviser. This factor was Sanjay Gandhi and his industrial ambition. Sanjay fancied himself as India's Henry Ford and resolved to build a car factory to turn out a people's car. The government powers and procedures were bent to the task of helping Sanjay in his project. The public criticism began to gather steam. Differences developed between the Prime Minister and P.N. Haksar over the Sanjay issue and Sanjay's Maruti car project. Haksar did not encourage the likes of Dharendra Brahmacharis, R.K. Dhawans and Yashpal Kapurs. Haksar also did not approve of the corrupt ways of Lalit Narain Mishra who had won the confidence of Sanjay as well as the mother. Haksar tried to restrain Mrs Gandhi. But his task was hopeless. Not only did Mrs Gandhi indulge her son's industrial fancies, she had set her heart on making her son the political successor also. Haksar now became an obstacle. Since Mrs Gandhi was determined to smoothen the succession of her younger son, the inconvenient Haksar was now shunted off to the decorative post of deputy chairman of the Planning Commission.



Professor P.N. Dhar now took over. But he was a modest economist and did not entertain any grand ambition which propelled Haksar. Under his regime real power slipped into the hands of Sanjay and R.K. Dhawan. The communist intellectuals and writers, who had aided Mrs Gandhi's drive to absolute power and had supported the Emergency coup d'etat organised by Sanjay and Siddhartha Shankar Ray, were now sidelined. They gave the Sanjay Gandhi clique the euphemistic title of extra-constitutional authority. Their role, like Haksar's, in subverting our cabinet system was most reprehensible.

The Shah Commission has competently examined the circumstances leading to the proclamation of the Emergency. The evidence revealed the following facts:

Sometime before 12 June, 1975 (the day of the judgment of the Allahabad High Court in the Indira Gandhi election petition), Mrs Gandhi told Siddhartha Shankar Ray on two or three occasions that what India needed was "a shock treatment". She did not elaborate—except to say that some sort of "emer-

P.N. Dhar took over from P.N. Haksar. Under his regime real power slipped into the hands of Sanjay Gandhi and R.K. Dhawan. Their role in subverting our cabinet system was most reprehensible

gent or drastic power was necessary".

The commission felt that emergent action was linked to the nature of the judgment in the stay petition filed by Mrs Gandhi in Raj Narain's election case

against her. If the stay had been unconditional no action would have followed. But since it was conditional Mrs Gandhi put into operation the plan of drastic action that was maturing in her mind.

On 25 June, Ray was summoned to Delhi. Mrs Gandhi spoke to him about all-round indiscipline and lawlessness. What she had in mind was the call issued by JP for a mass movement the previous evening. Ray's suggestion about dealing with the situation within the framework of the existing law did not impress her. Ray thereupon applied his mind to the question and came forward with the proposal to act under Article 352.

The cabinet was not summoned. Its Political Affairs Committee was not consulted. The important functionaries in the home ministry, the cabinet secretariat or the Prime Minister's Office were not brought into the consultation process. All these officials—Atma Jayaram, director (intelligence), and B.D. Pande of the cabinet secretariat came to know about it on 26 June, and P.N. Dhar was told about it at 11.30 pm when he was given the draft of Mrs Gandhi's AIR speech which she was going to make over the radio. However, R.K. Dhawan, in the Prime Minister's household, knew all the moves.

Sanjay was very active in the matter of arrests, cutting off electricity to newspapers and locking up the High Court and so on. Om Mehta, the minister of state for home affairs, also seemed to be in the picture. Brahmanand Reddy, who was summoned at 10.30 pm on 25 June, 1975, spoke feebly of the action that could be taken under the Emergency. Ultimately, all that the "successor" of Patel, Rajaji and G.B. Pant could say was that she should "do what she thought best".

In the evening Indira Gandhi and Ray saw the President. The President did not protest, but asked her to make her recommendation. Around 10.30 pm, some papers were received by the President.

After this Dhawan came in and the President signed the proclamation. He took away both the proclamation and the Prime Minister's letter. This letter was probably revised and sent back with the papers which were then deposited by the President.

The law minister was not consulted. Even if he had been, he would have repeated Reddy: "You are the best judge." The cabinet was summoned in the morning. Y.B. Chavan and others must have been sufficiently intimidated by the accomplished fact. ■

*Cabinet government in India by Madhu Limaye
Published by Radiant Publishers, New Delhi. Price Rs 300.*

Demolitions in the Jama Masjid area in Delhi; Mrs Gandhi with S.S. Ray: Emergency's architect



Kicking off a storm

Calcutta referees declare war after one of their colleagues is assaulted by players during a league match

Calcutta football is going through a termic experience. Although the gnawing at its vitals started almost two decades ago, it is only now that the full effect has started to show. Soccer in the city has come to a grinding halt and, at the time of going to press, there was no indication that any of it would resume in the near future.

The Calcutta Football League is usually spread over five months, with the top division teams playing 28 matches on a double-leg basis. Besides the first division 'A' teams, there are dozens of others in the first division 'B' and the second to fifth divisions. Apart from these, there are any number of office league matches, again with the teams placed in different divisions. All of these matches have been suspended following a decision by the Calcutta Referees Association to boycott all matches until its members were assured of physical security in and outside the playing fields.

The referees took this decision following a match between Mohun Bagan and Aryan Club, during and after which the supervisor of the tie, Pradip Nag, was allegedly assaulted by several players, repeatedly. At a meeting of its members, the referees felt that the public, police and the Indian Football Association (IFA), the controlling body for football in the state, had repeatedly sided with the big teams on the Calcutta Maidan—Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting—whenever the players or the public created problems on the field. This had resulted in a



situation where the referees did not feel safe on the field any more. Until the authorities guaranteed their safety—and took action against those involved in the fracas during and after the Mohun Bagan-Aryan match—they would not supervise any more matches.

"We want everyone to know that these Rs 25 a day referees can stop football in Calcutta. They have the power to do so," said a veteran referee after their meeting.

The strong stand the referees took caught the IFA by surprise. But even before it could contemplate action against the players mentioned by the referee in his official report to the IFA, one of those affected, Mohun Bagan stopper-back Subrata Bhattacharjee, sought court action in restraining the IFA from taking any action against him. This order is valid till 23 August, according to press reports.

Even as this football city waited anxiously for the resumption of matches, IFA secretary Prodyot Dutta, said: "There's not much to do except sleep. And watch the situation. I can't take any decision. Nor can our association. We have received the referee's report, but if the court of law does not allow a decision to be taken now, there is nothing we can do." He added: "Besides, in a situation

where the state government decides when, where and how our matches are to be scheduled, what can you expect?" This sentiment was echoed by other members of the association when they met to discuss certain aspects of the league.

IFA members went to the extent of castigating the sports minister, Subhas Chakravarty, for continuously taking the brief of the big clubs and thereby queering the pitch for the IFA. Recently, the minister decided that an important match between Mohun Bagan and another leading team, Mohammedan Sporting, would not get the status of an exhibition match. But he insisted that it be held at the Yuva Bharati Krirangan, Asia's largest stadium. Under normal circumstances, it is the IFA which decides whether a match should be billed as an exhibition tie—which, in effect, means that ticket prices would be much higher than normal. But the minister, while decreeing that it would be an ordinary match, hiked the admission price to Rs 2 and Rs 5, instead of the normal Re 1 and Rs 2.

Matches held in the three enclosed grounds on the Maidan yield revenue to the government, but 20 per cent of the total income is given to the IFA, to be distributed among the clubs. But in the



(Clockwise from left) Satyajit Chatterjee restrains Subrata Bhattacharjee (centre) from advancing towards referee Pradip Nag (far left); the referee is being escorted from the field by policemen; and Aryan goalkeeper Nihar Deb lies on the ground during the fracas: sorry state

case of matches at the Yuva Bharati Krirangan, the entire proceeds go to the government and to the Society for Sports and Stadium, which controls the large stadium. "Not only did the government cheat us out of the income, it had printed its own free VIP cards and distributed them to whomsoever it pleased," said one IFA member. "What kind of government and what sort of minister do we have?" he added. Criticism of the minister was so strong that the IFA representative from the district of Purulia decided to walk out. His decision was, of course, entirely political, because he also happened to be a CPI(M) MLA, and so, felt it wouldn't be advisable to hear the accusations.

While the MLA's walkout will not in any way affect any IFA decision, it

does prove that the IFA is facing pressure from many quarters simultaneously. The police, for example, were almost bystanders during that fateful match on the Mohun Bagan ground. The referee alleged that, despite provocation from the spectator galleries, he decided to continue the match. Two minutes from full time, the Aryan goalkeeper fell on

the ground. While he was taking time to get up, Mohun Bagan's Subrata Bhattacharjee allegedly kicked him and argued with the referee. He is reported to have said that time was being wasted and that the referee should not only make the goalkeeper get up but should compute the time being wasted.

At that stage of the match, no goals had been scored. Mohun Bagan stood to lose two precious points if the match ended in

a draw. The galleries were tense and the players charged. When Bhattacharjee was arguing, the referee cautioned him with the yellow card. Then all hell seemed to break loose. Several players charged towards the referee and, between flailing arms and legs, the referee showed the red card to Subrata.

But, before leaving the ground, the referee alleged that the players had repeatedly kicked and abused him. But he decided to continue with the match. When Subrata left the field, the game resumed. In the remaining time, Mohun Bagan managed to score the match-winner.

But this led to more trouble. Immediately after the match was over, the Aryan goalkeeper Nihar Deb allegedly assaulted the referee. Apparently, the Aryan players felt that the freekick awarded to Mohun Bagan was simply not there. The goal came immediately after. Referee Pradip Nag also alleged that Subrata Bhattacharjee assaulted him both in and outside the playing area and two other Mohun Bagan players, Satyajit Chatterjee and Saibal Chatterjee, also repeatedly fisted him.

But all the players concerned have denied these charges. They said that several people from the galleries had come into the ground during the disturbance and it was impossible to say who hit the referee. This may well be the legal stand that they are taking, but it is going to be difficult to prove their guilt—especially if the matter reaches a court of law.

The question here is: should such matters go to a court of law? Football is governed by internationally recognised rules and the official bodies to deal with them are the apex Indian body, AIFF, and the local association, IFA. If every decision is contested in court, there can be no football in this city.

The referees have seldom stood on their rights. Afraid of the public, the big clubs and sections of the IFA itself, they have often hesitated in taking strong action against erring players. Over two decades now, the situation has been allowed to grow to such an extent that these Frankenstein's of the Calcutta Maidan now seem to control the show.

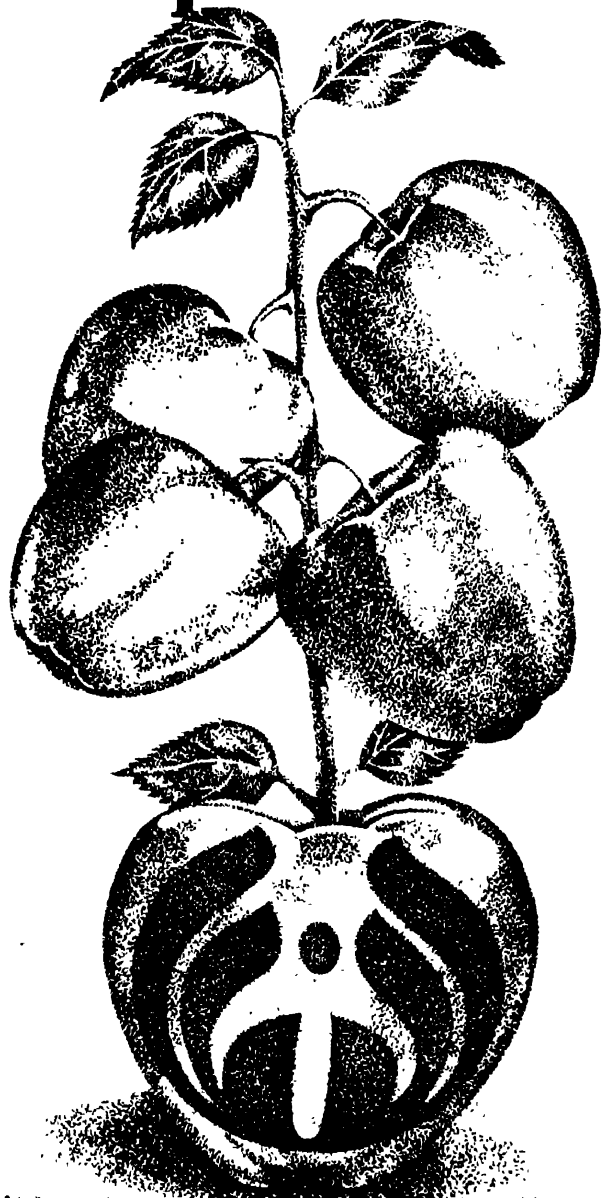
Right now, it is difficult to predict the outcome of the current impasse. While the referees are scheduled to sit with IFA and police officials to try and find a way out, it is certain that if the league is not resumed within a fortnight at most, there is no question of completing it. It may be remembered that last year's IFA Shield tournament also could not be held, though for different reasons.

Arijit Sen/Calcutta

The players concerned have said that several people from the galleries had come into the ground and it was impossible to say who hit the referee. This may well be their legal stand, but it is going to be difficult to prove their guilt

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If you are suffering from insomnia, here's a simple solution: eat lizards! The remedy is hard to swallow, but this is exactly what Naranbhai, a sweeper employed with the Reserve Bank of India in



Ahmedabad, does every day. He has a hearty meal of lizards which helps him sleep soundly.

Naranbhai stumbled upon his strange menu by accident. One morning way back in 1968, unknowingly, he ate a lizard along with his food. He realised his mistake only when he saw the tail of a reptile in his hands. But, after the meal he had a good sleep. After that, he started eating them regularly. He says that most of the time he just swallows them and falls asleep instantly. But he paid dearly for this unusual diet. His wife, repulsed by his lizard-eating habit, ultimately left him.

An unfailing spirit

Few can be as patient as her—and as tolerant. Twenty-four years ago, Chhaya Mehta's legs were amputated when she developed gangrene. At the same time, she had other problems: a high diabetic count, cataract in both the eyes and a defective kidney. But Chhaya learnt to face

them all—and bravely. The illnesses did not prevent her from working for a living. Mehta, who is in her forties now, is in charge of a telephone booth in Bombay. And now, she wants to "celebrate" the silver jubilee of her suffering and determination.

In the last 24 years, she has been travelling all over the country, looking for a cure and has spent Rs 2 lakhs on various treatments. Most of the money has been provided by her elder sister who works as an officer in a reputed firm.

Mehta, a graduate in home science, said that after she developed a minor infection in her legs, doctors put her on steroids. Later, she was given some injections that led to the gangrene formation and subsequently, her legs had to be amputated.



After some time, she even developed high blood pressure and her heart too became weak.

Food for thought

Does food motivate children to continue their schooling? Yes, says the eminent economist, Malcolm



Adisesiah. The mid-day meal scheme which was introduced in the schools of Tamil Nadu showed that food could be a good incentive for children to study in schools.

At a recent meeting of the Central Board of Advisory Education (CABE), Dr Adisesiah remarked that special funds should be provided for the supply of mid day meals to children all over the country. But then he has been facing a lot of opposi-

tion. His critics feel that the cost of feeding an estimated 100 million children was prohibitive. Assuming that just one rupee is spent on feeding a child, the cumulative cost for 200 school-days in a year would be Rs 2,000 crores. This would be too much of a burden for the Indian economy, CABE experts feel.

However, there are quite a few who agree with Dr Adisesiah that the mid-day meal scheme was worth its cost, since, besides raising literacy levels, it could eradicate malnutrition, a major disease affecting millions of children in India.

Better controllers

Women are turning out to be better traffic controllers than men. At least in Delhi, where some of the busiest crossings are being



regulated by women constables. About ten such women constables are posted at some of the busiest intersections, whose roads are jammed with more than a million vehicles.

As Delhi's Traffic Police chief S. B. Deol says, "The experiment to put women constables at select points to regulate the traffic flow has proved to be a success." The experiment, which was started two years ago, has been successfully implemented in Delhi. It strengthened the decision to induct more women in the traffic department on a more regular basis.

THIS INDIA

● **HYDERABAD:** For a change, dacoits turned into gourmets. What they wanted was delicious chicken, not gold or jewellery. The inmates of an isolated farmhouse in Yamjal village in Andhra Pradesh's Rangareddy district were in for a surprise recently. A five-member gang broke open the doors with boulders and ordered the inmates to prepare some dishes of chicken. They had a sumptuous dinner—*Indian Express* (Avula Ramesh Chander, Hyderabad)

● **PALGHAT:** A devotee of Siva, who tried to pose with a cobra around his neck in a bid to imitate his favourite deity, died of snake-bite recently. Murugan, an active worker of the Tamil Sangham, purchased the cobra from a snake-charmer, sported a beard and grew his hair like the lord. When he wanted to take a photograph with the cobra around his neck, the snake bit him. He was taken to the Thatchampara hospital and died soon after—*The Hindu* (S. Uma, Rourkela)

PRIZE RS 100 FOR THE ENTRY GIVEN FIRST

SUNDAY WEEK

BEGINNING 30 JULY 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

Be brave and forthright in whatever you do this week. There may be certain risks involved but do not be unduly worried. Businessmen, you may face some difficulties during this phase. But do not be upset, these hurdles will be overcome by hard work and determination. Travels are forecast in the end of the week. You are advised to maintain good relations with friends and acquaintances.

Good dates: 30, 31 and 5

Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 9

Favourable direction: South and East



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

You have been trying to avoid an important journey for quite some time, but this week you will definitely have to undertake it. But there is nothing to worry for it will turn to your advantage. Government employees, you will gain promotions or transfers by the end of the month. Those of you who have been heartbroken for a long time due to an unhappy love affair will find the opportunity to fall in love again.

Good dates: 1, 3 and 4

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: North and West



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

An important change in your career is forecast. Businessmen, forge ahead with present deals and you will gain profits. Some of you might have to change your residence. Professionals, this may be the right time to change your job. Family members will prove helpful. Those of you who are in love, a word of advice: do not speak rashly or impulsively with your beloved.

Good dates: 31, 2 and 5

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 5

Favourable direction: South-east



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

This is an important week as far as your career is concerned. Any changes you have been wanting to make should be done by the end of this week. Do not delay for they might not be beneficial later on. For those who are in love, this is not the opportune moment to propose to your beloved. Take care of your health. Do not spend lavishly.

Good dates: 2, 4 and 5

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6

Favourable direction: North-west



LEO (21 July—20 August)

This is, by and large, a fairly good week for you. Those on the lookout for a job may find work before the end of the week. Those in service may look forward to a promotion or a transfer. Financially, however, things don't look very bright. You may have to incur fresh loans. Gambling prospects do not look too good, either. The good offices of someone in office may benefit you.

Good dates: 1, 2 and 4

Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: East



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

A sudden turn of events will not only take you by surprise, but mark the beginning of a new phase of your life. Businessmen will have a very busy week entering into new deals which will turn out to be profitable in the long run. The domestic front will be a source of joy, friends and relatives will rally around and make this a very pleasant week for you. But be careful, for some may deceive you.

Good dates: 31, 2 and 3

Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: West



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

Provided you are extremely cautious, this week promises to be reasonably favourable. The professional front will present you with several opportunities, which if utilised will help you win the praise of those in authority. However, be on your guard, for enemies will be active this week, although they are in no position to do you harm. Your health may show signs of failing. Take care.

Good dates: 30, 31 and 1

Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: South



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

A good week for romance. You will be in a position to make the proposal you have been wanting to for so long. For those in business, a week of lucrative deals and contracts is forecast. However, keep a close watch on your purse strings, for financially, this is not a very good week. Chances are that you may have to incur some losses.

Good dates: 1, 2 and 3

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: North



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

This is a week of excellent prospects for you. Most of you are advised to check extravagance. Only then will you be able to save money for the future. For those of you who want to start a new venture, this is the right time to do so. Do not hesitate to ask a friend for help. Many of you who have been working hard will get a promotion towards the end of the month.

Good dates: 31, 2 and 5

Lucky numbers: 1, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: South



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

For those of you who are in love, this is the week you have been waiting for. But the phase is not favourable for those having problems with their employers. However, be tactful. You will have to guard against the risk of losing a dear friend. Those of you who have dealings with members of the opposite sex, be careful in whatever you say to them. Many of you might have to undertake a long journey towards the end of the week.

Good dates: 30, 4 and 5

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 8

Favourable direction: North



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

Your health may not be good this week. Try not to overstrain yourself. Take a lot of rest for hectic activity is forecast at the beginning of next week. However, those of you who have been working hard will be amply rewarded sometime this month. Be careful in whatever you say or write. A rash word or action may result in the loss of a few well-wishers. A favourable period for lovers.

Good dates: 3, 4 and 5

Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 8

Favourable direction: West



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

This is the week when you might have to undertake a journey which might solve one of your long-standing problems. Many of you might meet people on your tours who will be of immense help in the long run. Those of you who are in service, there is good news for you: a transfer or a promotion is forecast.

Good dates: 31, 1 and 5

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 9

Favourable direction: East

Star Partners: Virgo—Cancer

Cancer man is a very sensitive and emotional person, while the Virgo woman is more rational and practical. She may find his emotional intensity very disturbing at times. She may not be able to understand his feelings and this may lead to strains in their relationship.



His own man

While the rest of the Opposition was asking Rajiv Gandhi to step down, Subramaniam Swamy of the Janata Party was demanding the resignation of Ramakrishna Hegde as the vice-president of the Janata Dal in Bangalore. As his colleagues took on the Prime Minister, Swamy, who conforms only to himself, raised the question of Hegde's involvement in land scandals during his tenure as chief minister of Karnataka.

The maverick politician also charged Hegde of being a coward for filing a defamation suit against him in the busy Bombay courts "where it will take 20 years for a judgement to be given. Hegde will be 82 years old then and too old to be put in jail."

But it wasn't as if Swamy had forgotten all about the CAG report on Bofors in his obsession with Hegde. But he went for the Opposition and not Rajiv. He warned V.P. Singh and his friends to be careful with the gun lest it "backfire". He pointed out that Singh had been defence minister when the Bofors deal was finalised and threatened to write to the President about the Raja's 'crimes', such as tax evasions, violations of the Land Reforms Act, etc. All in a day's work for the fiery crusader.

Closing the door

It's reconciliation time in the AIADMK—at least as far as arch-rivals Jayalalitha Jayaram and R.M. Veerappan go. The *Bonhomie*, however, does not extend to former minister Panrutti S. Ramachandran, a close confidant of MGR. Jayalalitha still bears a grudge against Ramachandran for his



Swamy: fiery crusader

scheming in the post-MGR months to promote himself in the party hierarchy. Recently, at a press conference, Jayalalitha made it clear that her efforts to unite all MGR followers definitely do not include him. "Mr Ramachandran will never be readmitted into the party. He is a destructive element," she said emphatically.

Why this animosity towards Ramachandran when Veerappan has been forgiven for graver crimes and welcomed back? Insiders say Ramachandran's greatest 'crime' in the eyes of Jayalalitha was influencing the Centre to extend President's Rule in Tamil Nadu by another six months in June last year. Jayalalitha had toured the state extensively and expected a comfortable victory if the elections were held then. But, at Ramachan-

Panrutti S. Ramachandran: no warm welcome



Hegde: incurring Swamy's ire

dran's intervention, her plans were foiled. No wonder the two haven't kissed and made up.

Movie mania



Mandakini: Babu's Menaka

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. When N.T. Rama Rao conceived of *Viswamitra*, he couldn't have anticipated competition. The film,

he went about telling everybody, would be the first real blockbuster on one of Indian mythology's most important sages.

But well before he had the script ready, rival movie mogul Dasari Narayana Rao had decided to make *Viswamitra* as a serial for Doordarshan. Then, about three months ago, Andhra Pradesh MLA Hiram Jogaiah declared he would produce *Viplavamitra*, a thinly-disguised satire on NTR and his movie. The latest to follow in his celluloid footsteps is APCC(I) member Suryanarayana Babu. His film: *Kaliyuga Viswamitra* 1990.

Babu's film, which will be replete with political overtones, is aimed at embarrassing NTR. He has already



Babu: embarrassing NTR

roped in the well-endowed Hindi film heroine Mandakini to play Menaka (NTR has plumped for the irreverent Iyengar, Meenakshi Seshadri) and is looking around for a suitable Bombay hero to play her man. Babu is the president of the recently-launched Superstar Krishna Prasadakhti, which is committed to "fight against NTR's political insanity". The organisation owes allegiance to Krishna, Telugu cinema's matinee idol and active Congress supporter.

Says Babu, "My film is sure to be a big shock for NTR." Say his detractors, "It is sure to be an even bigger shock for the audiences." □

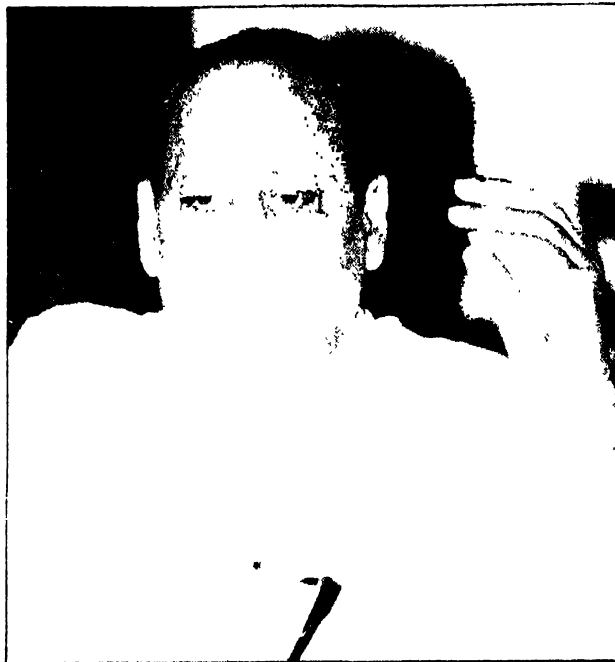
On his way out?

Is the All India Congress Committee (AICC-1) general secretary, K.N. Singh, set to go? With the party high command having become extremely unhappy with him, it appears very likely. Singh who looked after the Congress' interests in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka was recently relieved of all three charges. The political top dogs felt that he wasn't conversant enough with southern politics and were particularly upset over the way he handled the Tamil Nadu elections. When some Congressmen suggested an alliance with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), K.N. Singh strongly opposed the proposal arguing that the "secular credentials" of the DMK were suspect and that the party, having burnt copies of the Constitution, was anti-national. Singh had his way and the consequences of his decision don't need stating.

The high command was also annoyed over his opposition to the entry of Pepsi Cola and his characterisation of the pro-democracy movement in China as "counter-revolutionary". Sources say that while Tamil Nadu was bad enough, political bosses might find the last two 'political mistakes' too much to forgive.

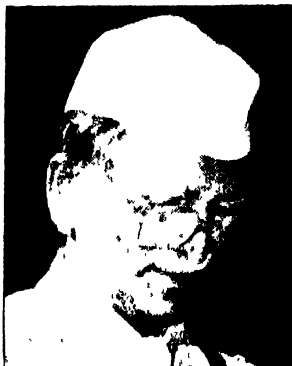
Talking of Rajiv

With the Opposition after his blood over the CAG report on Bofors, will Rajiv Gandhi panic? Yes, if N.G. Ranga of the Congress(I), the seniormost parliamentarian and a member of the Constituent Assembly which drew up the Constitution, is to be believed. Speaking informally to members of the Opposition, Ranga warned them against con-



K.N. Singh: In the high command's bad books?

tinuing their boycott of Parliament. "What you are doing will force the poor young Prime Minister to dissolve Parliament and continue as



N.G. Ranga: worried about Rajiv

interim Prime Minister," he is supposed to have said. That's probably the only way of getting out of the mess he's landed himself in, replied Opposition MPs wryly. At least then, he wouldn't be accountable to Parliament.

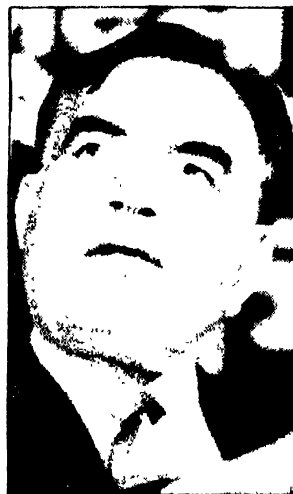
Playing safe

Was the government preparing its defence even before the CAG report was made public? That, at least, is what the Opposition

believes. When Parliament opened for the monsoon session, the Opposition demanded that the report—which was supposed to be released in the previous session—be tabled. The Speaker, Balram Jakhar, said it would be placed before the Lok Sabha later in the day. Why not immediately, asked Opposition MPs. But the Speaker gave no explanations.

The Opposition now alleges that the government needed time to prepare a point-by-point rebuttal to the

Balram Jakhar: no explanations



report before the matter came up for discussion. Sure enough, no sooner was the report tabled than a number of Congress MPs issued a statement attacking it.

Newspeak

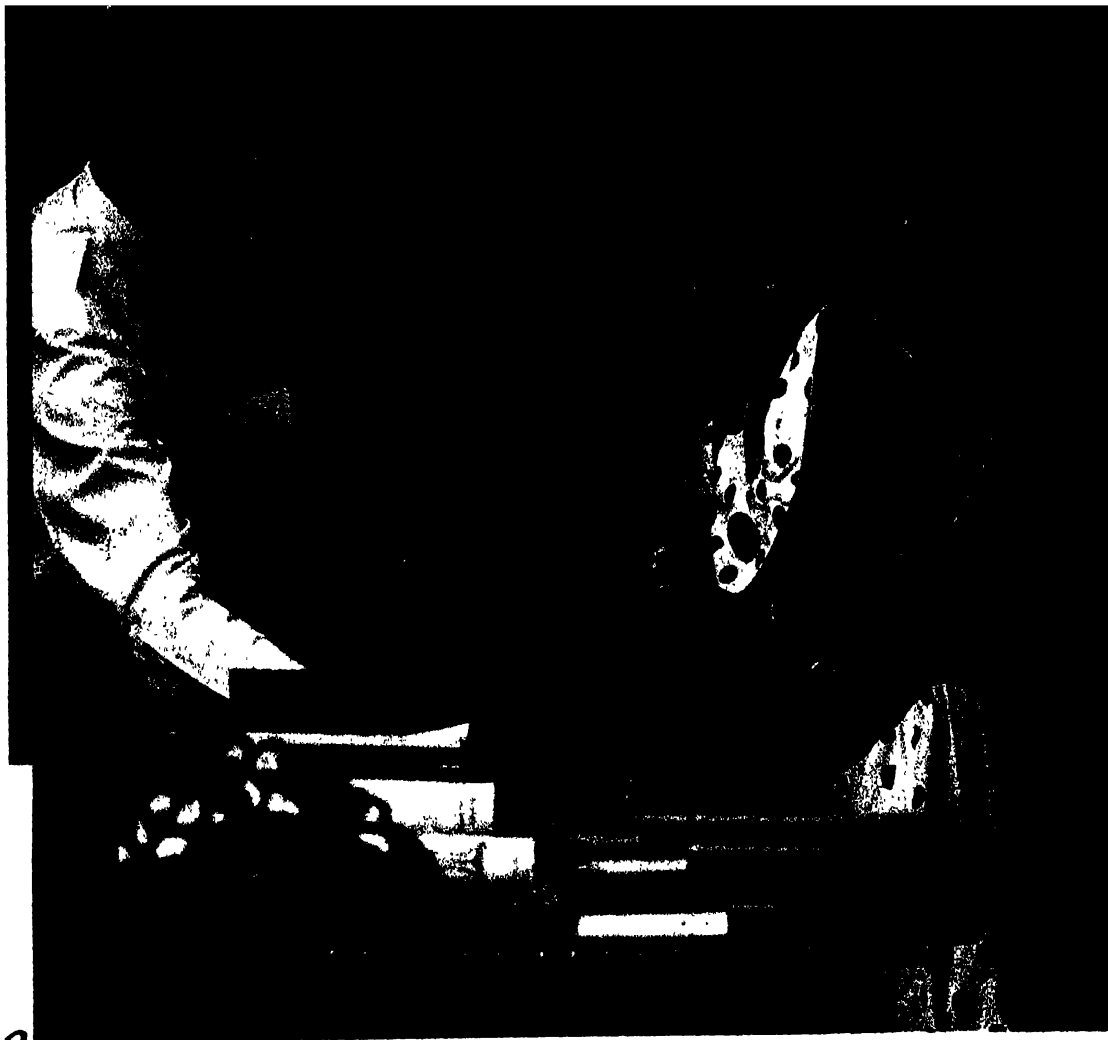
Protecting Rajiv Gandhi's image seems to be an obsession with AIR and Doordarshan these days. And if this makes news reports a bit lopsided, so be it. After the CAG report was tabled, the minister for information and broadcasting, H.K.L. Bhagat, issued strict instructions to the official media: avoid mentioning the slogan "Rajiv Gandhi step down" raised by Opposition members in Parliament. Faithfully, news bulletins re-



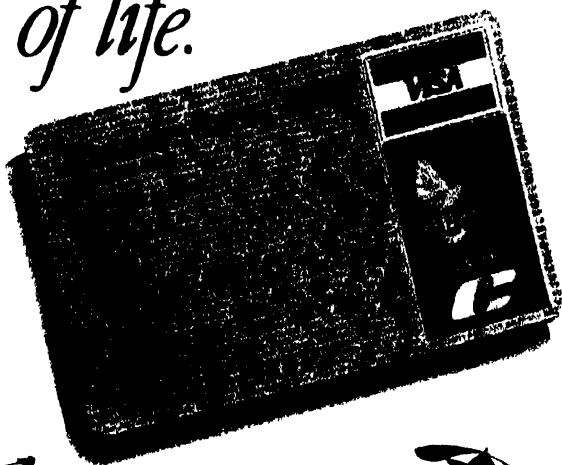
H.K.L. Bhagat: protecting Rajiv's image

ported that the Opposition had demanded that "the government should resign".

Doordarshan went even further. It telecast interviews with people who had witnessed the uproarious scenes in Parliament from the visitors' gallery. Naturally, all agreed that "the Opposition had behaved very badly". Even children were roped in to boost the Prime Minister's image—a young girl likened the Opposition MPs to "unruly schoolchildren". So much for Rajiv's talk of a free press. ☐



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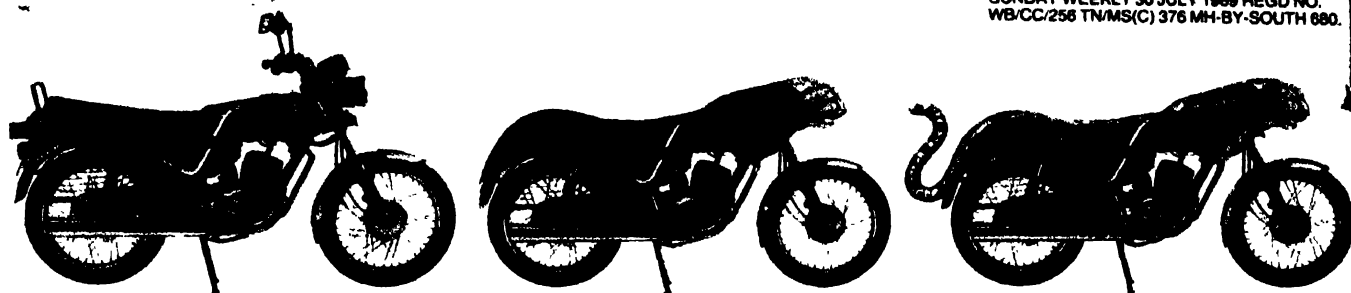
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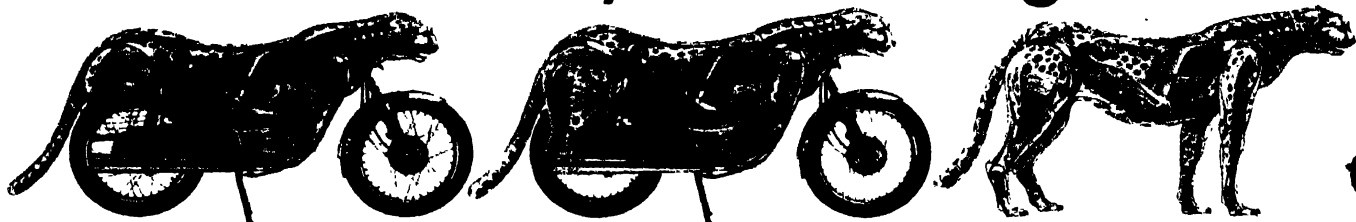
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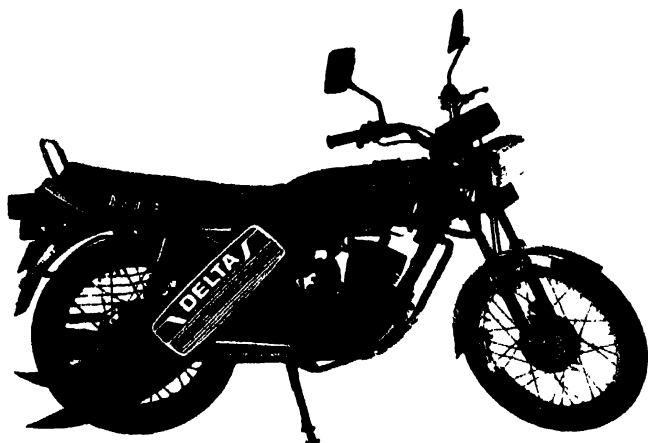
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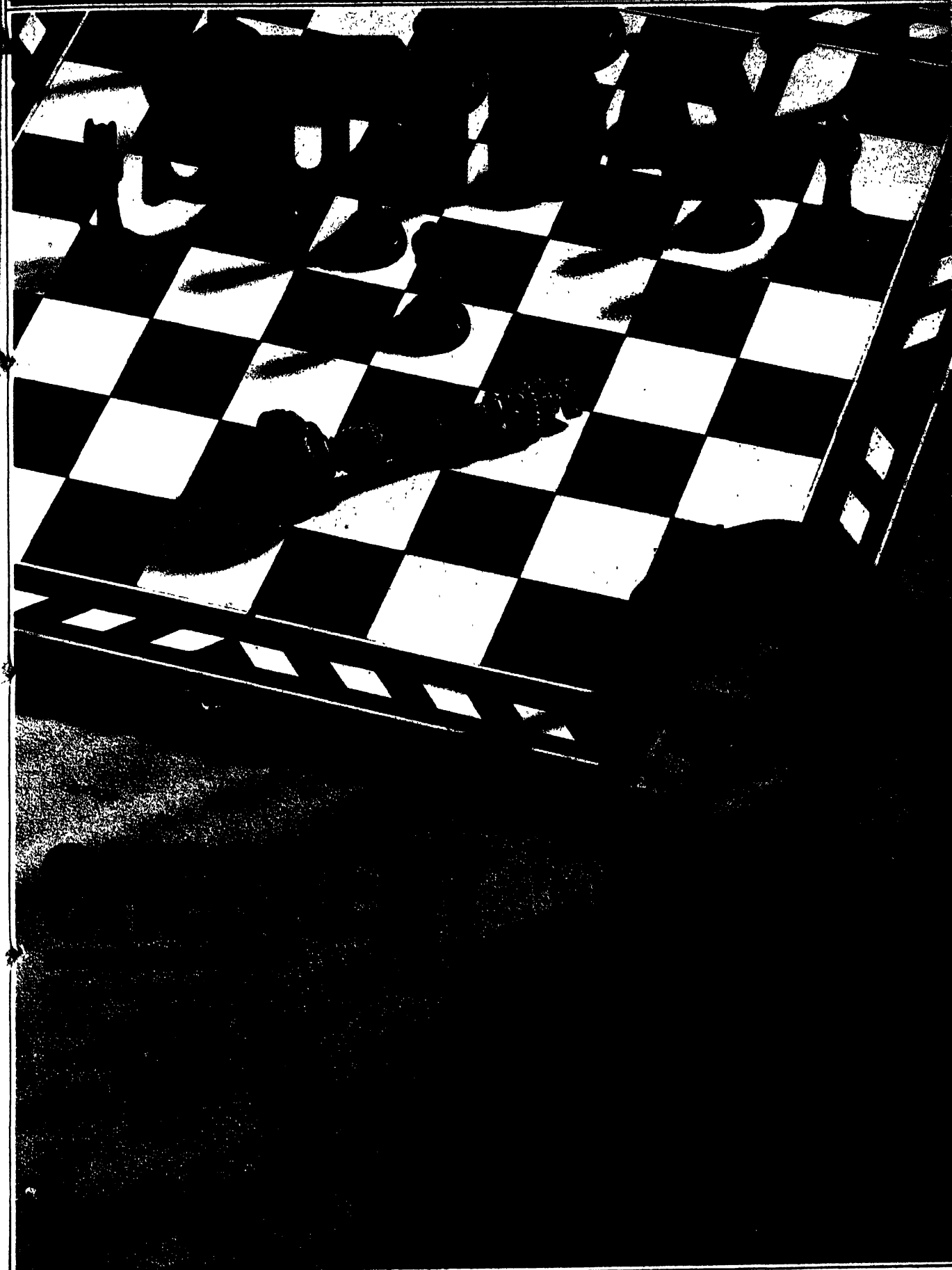


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LETTERS

Widening the gap

It was a good analysis of the Sri Lankan President's political gambit (*Power games*, 16—22 July). The boycott of SAARC and call for the withdrawal of the IPKF are evidence that Premadasa is moving along a confrontationist path. It is not India which is flexing its muscles, but the intransigence of the Sri Lankan President which is widening the yawning gap between the two countries. Whatever might have been the compulsions behind Premadasa's move, he would have done well to recognise the repercussions of his moves.

The IPKF went to Sri Lanka to bring peace to the strife-torn island, at the behest of its then President. While India is agreeable to a phased withdrawal of the peace-keeping forces, President Premadasa is adamant about a total withdrawal. But he should see reason before it is too late.

Kali Charan Banerjee, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Getting tough

President Premadasa's stand on the withdrawal of the IPKF is uncalled for (*Confrontation*, 9—15 July). Sri Lanka had entered into the accord after thorough bilateral discussions. Thus, it is hardly fair to make a unilateral declaration and claim that the IPKF's task has been completed. Further, abstention from the SAARC Summit and the discussion of bilateral and contentious issues was a violation of the



R. Premadasa: unreasonable stand

SAARC charter. It will be in the interest of the two countries to come to the negotiating table and discuss the issue of the IPKF's pull-out from the island.

Vandana Sethi, New Delhi

Imran as editor



Imran: Into journalism

Congratulations for portraying a different side to Imran Khan (*Man of many talents*, 16—22 July). Despite the poor response to *Cricket Life* in the initial stages, with Imran as the editor-in-chief and Sunil Gavaskar on the editorial board, sales are bound to pick up. In the long run, nothing can prevent the magazine from reaching the top of the popularity charts.

S. Hussain, Dibrugarh (Assam)

A pleasant surprise

I was pleasantly surprised to know that some of our politicians are poets too (*The poet as politician*, 2—8

July). Despite leading such busy lives as well as running the government, it is indeed creditable that they have churned out such marvellous poetry! The poems of Priya Ranjan Dasgupta, Anshi, Karan Singh, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mani Shankar Aiyar deserve special mention. One was especially elated to learn that one of Dasgupta's poems has won applause from Benazir Bhutto. During the campaign in the forthcoming elections, one hopes to see the poet-politicians addressing the masses with their compositions.

Tanmoy Ghosh and Misty Basu, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Sari-clad format

Kushwant Singh, while reviewing a Writers Workshop book, alleges that these books "are published at the writer's expense" (*Indian wit and humour*, 16—22 July). Our manner of publication is very simple. We normally print 500 copies, and give 50 copies (10 per cent) to the author in lieu of royalties. We also expect the author to make an advance purchase of 100 copies which become his to sell or distribute as he pleases. Should the Sardar wish to appear in sari-clad format, the same terms will apply to him. But he will have to meet another essential requirement: the MSS he submits must show "high imaginative awareness and mature technique".

P. Lal, Calcutta (West Bengal)

The best of the lot

The only crime Atal Behari Vajpayee appears to have committed was adhering to the principles he thought were right (*Why Vajpayee failed*, 16—22 July). It is indeed a pity that an honest and sincere politician like him is today in the wilderness. While Vajpayee has never been accused of corruption, dishonesty or negligence of duty, it is strange to find him away from the glare of the public eye. Today, the BJP is worth its credibility only because of this great



Vajpayee: clean image

leader. With the elections round the corner, the electorate would do well to recognise the merits of Vajpayee. If they fail this time, nothing can prevent the country from going to the dogs.

Prabhakar S. Harsole, Indore (Madhya Pradesh)

Shocking!

What Madan Mohan Gupta and his parents have done to Madhu is a common occurrence today (*Justice denied*, 2—8 July). Dowry is the easiest source of wealth for the groom's family and they resort to the vilest of means to acquire it from the bride's family. What was shocking was the casual apathy of the police where the crime was reported. Gupta and his parents must be arrested immediately.

S. Sunder, New Delhi

A rejoinder

Apropos the article (A police investigation, 18-24 June), the correspondent should have given me an opportunity to give my viewpoint since my reputation is involved. Major Jora Singh is the original allottee of plot No. 37 in Sainik Farms. His neighbour, S. S. Nirula, who is involved in 18 cases of cheating and illegal land sales, has claimed without any supporting evidence that he has purchased the land from Jora Singh. The retired major has also denied the existence of any sale agreement. Nirula wanted to grab this land although a case is pending in the lower court as well as in the Delhi High Court. Besides, there is no CBI enquiry on this issue. There was, of course, an enquiry by the deputy commissioner, vigilance, which has upheld the action of the police. Also, there was no notice by Justice B. N. Kirpal to the undersigned about construction on this particular plot. In fact, Justice Kirpal discharged the notice after it was pointed out to him that the police could act only when asked to do so by the municipal authorities. And, since the revenue authorities have all along recognised Jora Singh's continued possession of this plot for the last 28 years, there is no question of the police misusing its powers to help a legitimate owner. Even the incident in which Saranjeet Singh was killed, has no relation with the case as was made out by the article. The investigation was referred by me to the crime branch as I felt that Nirula may not be satisfied with an investigation by the local police.

P. R. S. Brar, deputy commissioner of police, south district, New Delhi

Alka Saxena replies:
According to Mr Brar, Major Jora Singh has denied any sale agreement with Nirula. I would like to inform him that SUNDAY has a photocopy of

So much for investigation

Udayan Sharma's column is a perfect instance of how investigative articles should not be written (Hawaiian holiday, 9-15 July). Talking of evidence, does Mr Sharma know what a luxury liner is, let alone the ability to hire one? Speaking of long-distance calls the columnist is at pains to write of a call to Hambros—he shows no proof—but is suspiciously silent about the one long-distance call made from

Hotel Century Plaza, Los Angeles, whose bill is produced with the actual called number. For Mr Sharma's information, 91 is the code for India.

In all sincerity, I believe, the photographs and the bills are plants. The intention was to make idle journalists fall for a tailored scandal. All Udayan Sharma can now do is seek K. K. Tewari's help to draft a rejoinder.

Promod Bhandari, New Delhi

the sale deed worth Rs 4 lakhs as well as a copy of a receipt for Rs 50,000 paid to Jora Singh by Nirula. If both these papers are forged, then why has Jora Singh not filed a case of forgery against Nirula? It is true the judge sent him a notice regarding construction in the Sainik Farms area in general. But, was not the notice served only after this particular case came up in court? It is surprising that Mr Brar is so eager to prove Jora Singh's ownership of the land, despite the sale agreement, and giving 'verdicts' when the case is sub judice. I concede that it was not a CBI inquiry but a vigilance one that was conducted into the allegation of his partiality in the land grab case. Though he says that the murder has no link with the land case, can Mr Brar deny that the

crime branch is investigating it only because doubts would have been cast about his impartiality?

Rajiv's media



Rajiv Gandhi: overexposure

Over the past year, there has been a tremendous increase in the coverage given to Rajiv Gan-

dhi and the Congress (I) on Doordarshan as well as AIR (The Rajiv show, 9-15 July). Doordarshan has become 'Rajivdarshan' while Akashvani has become 'Rajivvani'. With the elections fast approaching, the PM obviously needs to keep himself as well as his cronies in the limelight. Only then can he tilt the electoral bank in his favour.

No doubt, the PM is the leader of the nation and whatever he wishes to convey to the masses ought to be given top priority, but to completely ignore the voice of the Opposition is not fair.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

A student first

Rahul Gandhi must have realised that being a Prime Minister's son is not easy (Marks and the man, 16-22 July). The BJP's Madan Lal Khurana is raising a hue and cry for no reason. What he ought to realise is that the St Stephen's College authorities would never have violated a rule to admit the PM's son. Excellence in sport has always been given weightage for admission. He should also bear in mind that



Rahul Gandhi: a target
proficiency in drama, recitation and sport are given special consideration since they are mentioned in the Concurrent List of the Constitution. The Indian National Forum deserves to be congratulated for standing up for Rahul.

A.B. Roy, Hooghly (West Bengal)

SUNDAY

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Kama to Rama



The voyage to 'discovery' is through lust, claims Acharya Rajneesh

KHUSHWANT SINGH

There are many ways of attaining godhood, say teachers of religion. Acharya Rajneesh disagrees and says there is only one way and sexual intercourse is the first step towards it. He maintains that religion as it is practised, is false and its propagators are agents of Satan. They have degraded love and taught us the negation of life. The philosophy of religion has always been death-oriented instead of being life-oriented. He goes on to add: "I call religion the art of living. Religion is not a way to undermine life, it is a medium for delving deeply into the mysteries of existence. Religion is not turning one's back on life, it is facing life squarely. Religion is not escaping from life; religion is embracing life fully. Religion is the total realisation of life."

Since love is the essence of all religions and sex the essence of love, you cannot side-step it to proceed on your voyage of discovery. Rajneesh writes, "Sex is the beginning of the journey to love. The origin, the Gangotri of the Ganges of Love, is sex, passion—and everybody behaves like its enemy. Every culture, every religion, every guru, every seer has attacked this Gangotri, this source, and the river has remained bottled up. The hue and cry has always been, 'Sex is sin. Sex is irreligious. Sex is poison, but we never seem to realise that ultimately it is the sex energy itself that travels to and reaches the inner ocean of love. Love is the transformation of sex energy.'"

Because sex has been condemned and suppressed, "it has become an obsession, a disease, a perversion," says the Acharya, and advises us to "accept sex with joy. Acknowledge its sacredness... When a man approaches his wife he should have a sacred feeling, as if he were going to a temple. And when a wife goes to her husband she should be full of reverence one has nearing God. In the

moments of sex, lovers pass through coitus, and that stage is very near to the temple of God, to where he is manifest in creative formlessness." He conjectures that man had his first glimpse of *samadhi* during sexual intercourse culminating in a climax when the mind becomes empty of thoughts. Thus *vishyanand* (bliss of coitus) and *Brahmanand* (bliss of union with God) are much the same; one is ephemeral, the other eternal.

NOT ALL sexual intercourse is experience of divinity. For that you have to first get rid of your ego—"Unless I dissolve myself, how can the other unite with me?" he asks. Love always gives; the ego is ever the grabber; love is motiveless, the ego always motivated; the ego only understands the language of taking; the language of giving is love. The second condition to be fulfilled is the feeling of timelessness. "In orgasm, the sense of time is non-existent. There is no past, no future, there is only the present moment."

The Acharya has some practical suggestions to overcome an unhealthy obsession with sexuality. Children should be allowed to remain nude as much as possible in the home so that they do not develop prurient curiosity in private organs. They should also be taught to meditate (on what, he does not say) in silence for at least one hour every day. They should be taught what sex is all about before they are old enough to engage in it. He writes, "Sex is the most mysterious, most profound, most precious and, at the same time, the most accursed subject; and we are in total darkness about it. We never pay our attention to this important phenomenon. A man goes through the routine of coitus throughout his life, but he does not know what it is."

The Acharya, who claims to have had sexual fulfilment in his previous life which cleared his mind of sexuality for

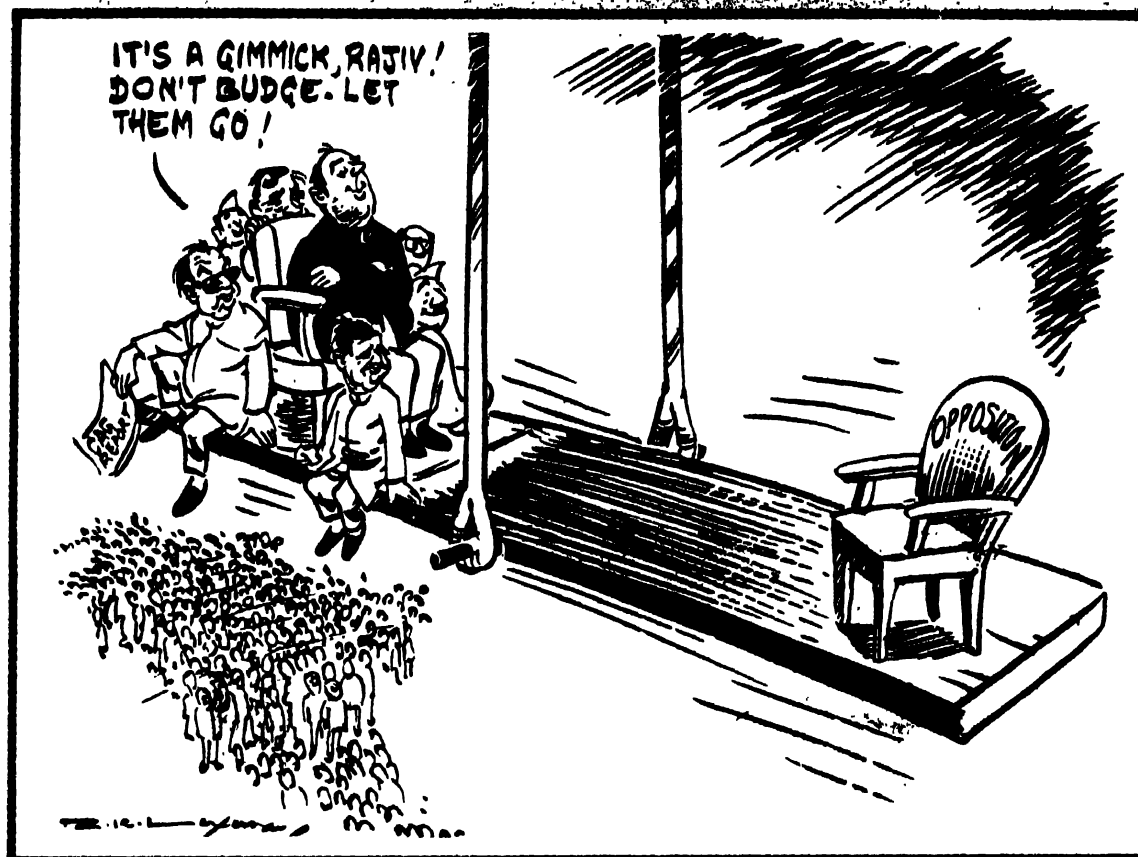
Acharya Rajneesh claims that religion as it is practised is false and its propagators are agents of Satan. They have degraded love and taught us the negation of life. The philosophy of religion has always been death-oriented instead of being life-oriented

his present incarnation and those to come, tells how to get the best out of coitus. Most of us are used to quickies which end in frustration and incite us to have more of the same thing. Coitus, he tells us, must be prolonged as much as possible. In the way of techniques he suggests slowing down one's breathing and focusing awareness to a point between the eyes, the seat of the *agnichakra*. If you can prolong intercourse to one hour, you need not think of sex for the rest of your life; if you can prolong to three hours, you will be liberated from sexuality for your lives to come. A third essential condition is that you should approach sex with reverence. "Give sex a

sacred status in your life," he says. "At the time of coitus we are close to God."

THE ACHARYA tells us the sculptors of erotica on the temples of Konark, Khajuraho and Puri had the right approach to sex. We should have such temples all over India. *Tantriks* were also on the right path; preachers of religious dogma suppressed them. He concludes: "The journey to *kama* is also the journey to Rama. The journey to lust is also the journey to light. The tremendous attraction for sex is also the search for the sublime."

It is difficult to decide how seriously one can take Rajneesh. As anything else he writes, his *From Sex to Super-Consciousness* is extremely readable. ■



R.K. LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA

No, we are not carrying on a crusade against the government. We are only checking if public money has been spent in the manner it should have been.

T.N. CHATURVEDI, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India

Is the CAG report a conclusion? If so, will the government of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal, who have been indicted occasionally, quit?

K.C. PANT, Union defence minister

Had I been in charge of the defence ministry when the deal was signed, the country would not have been put to such a shame.

V.P. SINGH, Janata Dal president, on the Bofors gun deal

We would do our best to send it to the WPB (waste-paper basket) of the two Houses

N.R.P. SALVE, Congress(I) MP, on the CAG report

CIA ke kutte ko bahar nikalo (Throw out the CIA dog).

RATNAKAR PANDEY, Congress(I) MP in Rajya Sabha, on Ram Jethmalani's presence in the House

At zero hour yesterday, some of your colleagues well-known for their very special talents converted the House into something worse than a fish market. Never has such foul and vulgar abuse been heard on the floor of the House ... Obviously, the performance had been carefully rehearsed and had your full approval.

RAM JETHMALANI, lawyer and Janata Dal MP, in a letter to Rajiv Gandhi referring to the incident when he was called a dog.

Is it not incredible? All their policies and ideologies have been thrown to the wind.

RAJIV GANDHI, Prime Minister, on the Opposition parties coming together on the Bofors issue

I have no politics of my own... My only aim has been to obey the command of the leadership.

BUTA SINGH, Union home minister

There are no secret meetings. Farmers are open-hearted, down to earth people. Our meetings, too, are open.

RAJESH PILOT, Union minister of state for surface transport, replying to whether his government has secret meetings with Mahendra Singh Tikait, peasant leader

I am the number one leader of the Muslim community in India.

SYED SHAHABUDDIN, Muslim leader and Janata Dal MP

Even a loud-mouth has to stop somewhere.

RAJESH KHAITAN, West Bengal Congress(I) MLA, on film actor Shatrughan Sinha's comments on Marwaris

A crisis of identity

Why so many ethnic groups in Assam are clamouring for autonomy

Who is an Assamese? With more and more groups of people in the state claiming that they have distinct ethnic identities, the question assumes considerable significance. The agitation for a separate state by one of the major plains tribes of Assam—the Bodos—has received much publicity. Led by the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), it has resulted in destruction and bloodshed. But there are many other such groups, and while not all of them want separation from Assam, as the ABSU does, their demands reflect an overpowering need to preserve their individual identities.

The tribals of Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar hills want an autonomous state comprising these two districts. The Mishings, the second largest plains tribe after the Bodos, who wield power mainly in the Lakhimpur district, have similar aspirations. The Ahoms, under the banner of the All Assam Tai Ahom Yuba Chhatra Parishad (AATAYCP), want a separate 'Ahomland'. The All Cachar Karimganj Students' Association (ACKSA), which claims to represent the Bengalis of the Barak Valley, demands a 'Barakland'. The Koch Rajbongshis and the tea garden labourers (known in Assam as the tea community) urge that they be registered as Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Lalungs, yet another plains tribe, want an autonomous district council.

If all these groups maintain that they are not really Assamese, then who is? Only the caste Hindus, the dominant power group in the state, it seems. Although a minority, this group controls the politics and economics of the state. It refuses to acknowledge that the smaller groups have distinct ethnic identities. And whenever the different groups make sectarian demands, the caste Hindus see behind this the hand of Christian missionaries, a malevolent Centre or even a foreign power.

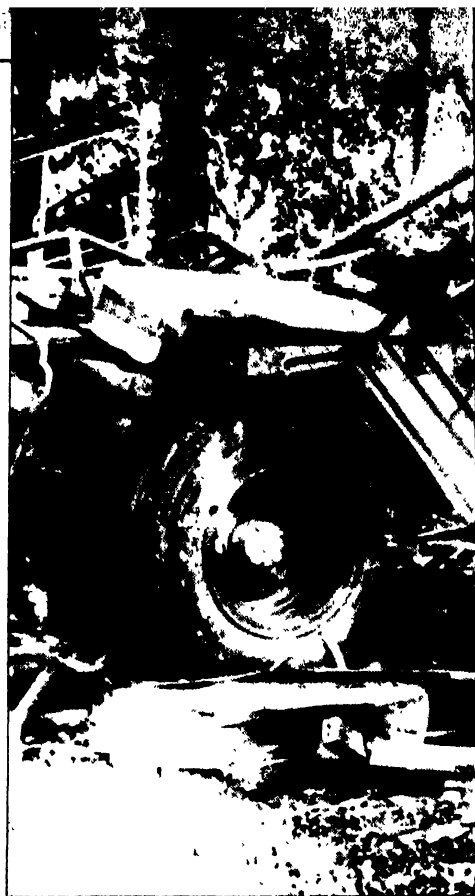
As Rajen Saikia, a lecturer in history at the Nagaon Girls College, pointed out

in a recent article on the Bodo agitation, "Had the Assamese upper-middle class exercised its power with some circumspection, the situation today would have been less aggravating." Saikia wrote, "Even those Bodos who were initiated into Hinduism were placed in the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy." Similarly, the Koch Rajbongshis are labelled a "neech jaat" in Assamese dictionaries, according to K.M. Choudhury, an office-bearer of the Koch Rajbongshi Chhatriya Yuva Sammillan, an organisation fighting for the inclusion of this community among the Scheduled Tribes.

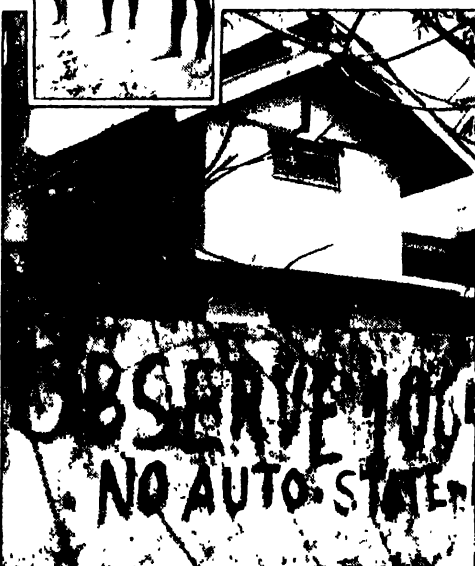
The agitation of the tribals of Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar hills for an autonomous state exemplifies the problem. Almost as serious and sustained as the ABSU's movement, this agitation commenced around the same time, but has not been given as much publicity because it has remained largely non-violent. What distinguishes it from other separatist movements in the country, including the one for Bodoland, is that no constitutional amendment is required to concede to the demand: Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills are among the areas listed in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which under Article 244A can be converted into an "autonomous state" if Parliament so desires.

The very incorporation of this provision implies that the hill tribes are ethnically different from the Assamese, the movement leaders maintain. When Meghalaya was granted autonomy in 1970, these two hill districts too were given the option of choosing between Assam and Meghalaya. But, influenced by Chhatra Singh Teron, a hill tribal himself and a powerful minister in the Congress government in power in Assam then, they preferred to stay with Assam. But soon afterwards, they had second thoughts. The demand for an autonomous state for these two districts first arose in 1974.

Political expediency prompted the



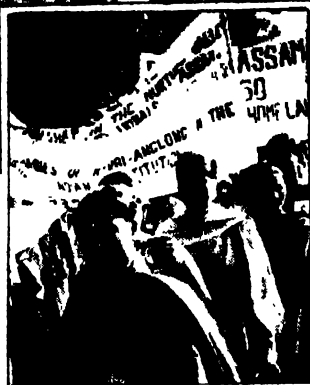
(Inset) The tribals of Karbi Anglong have been pressing for an autonomous state. (Below) They have called for many *bandhs* to demand this



Congress(I) to revive the demand three months after the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) assumed power in December 1985. Together with its associate, the Karbi Anglong Adorbar, the Congress(I) formed the Central Autonomous State Demand Committee, with a local Con-



(Top) The Bodo agitation has attracted nationwide attention because of the violence it has perpetrated; (inset) Bodo tribals believe that they have been neglected by successive governments



gress(I) MLA, G.C. Langthasa, as its working president. On 17 May, 1986, the Congress(I) called a meeting under the auspices of one of its tribal youth fronts—to which other groups in the area were also invited—at Diphu, the headquarters of Karbi Anglong. It was

decided then to form a new committee comprising all the groups which supported the demand. But when elections to the executive positions of this committee were held the same day, the Congress(I) nominees were routed. They withdrew in a huff. The new organisation, comprising 17 different groups, was called the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC). The

Throughout 1987 the ASDC-KSA organised a series of successful programmes, culminating in a 100-hour bandh in January 1988. The AGP government retaliated by letting loose a reign of terror

ASDC also has the support of yet another influential group in the area, called the Karbi Students Association (KSA), formed in 1959.

Throughout 1987 the ASDC-KSA organised a series of successful programmes, culminating in a 100-hour bandh in January 1988, to which the AGP government retaliated by letting loose a reign of terror. Police atrocities were common. The main grouse of the agitationists is that the powers of the present district council are limited. Their other complaints are that the two districts have been grossly neglected and that jobs and contracts in these areas are mostly cornered by non-tribals from the plains.

While the Karbi leaders have refrained from joining hands with the Bodo agitationists, the other two organisations advocating separation from Assam, the ACKSA and the AATAYCP, formed a joint coordination committee along with the ABSU in March this year. The ACKSA wants a 'Barakland' in the Barak Valley, which has a population of 30 lakhs, a majority of whom are Bengalis. This demand is a direct offshoot of the vociferous opposition by the AGP and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) to the establishment of a central varsity in the Barak Valley. The ACKSA president, Pradip Dutta Ray, alleged that although the Centre has already sanctioned Rs 70.18 crores for the university, the state government has not allotted the required 500 acres of land. Dutta Ray's other grievances sound familiar enough: lack of development projects in the Barak Valley, a high rate of unemployment, *et al.*

The demand for an 'Ahomland' by the AATAYCP seems to be the most inchoate among all the movements. The Ahoms, who came from Thailand some 700 years ago, are among the oldest groups in Assam, which in fact derives its name from them. They are concentrated mainly in upper Assam, and ruled the state until 1826, when their rulers signed the Treaty of Yandabo with the British. Although with the spread of Vaishnavism in the state, the Ahoms were converted to Hinduism over a period of time and assimilated into Assamese society, they frequently asserted their right to a separate identity—the first time being just before Independence, when the All Assam Ahom Association was formed. This association spoke out against the Ahoms' conversion to Hinduism and opposed a proposal to list them as Hindus in a forthcoming census. But the movement never took off, because a large number of Ahoms refused to give

up the age-old Hindu social customs and ways.

The AATAYCP was formed in 1981 but not until the Bodo agitation gained strength did it give the call for a separate 'Ahomland' comprising the five districts of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and North Lakhimpur in Upper Assam. Its president, Ranjan Bikash Borgohain, was a polling agent of the former chief minister, Hiteswar Saikia, so many accuse the Congress of instigating the movement to embarrass an already beleaguered AGP government. A parallel Ahom outfit, the All Tai Ahom Students' Union, while stopping short of separation, demands the revival of the Tai language (the original language of the Ahoms now hardly spoken by anyone) and the listing of the Ahoms as a separate group, distinct from the

The three-year-old AGP government is today confronted by a grave crisis. Ethnic upsurges are on the increase, and solutions must be found before they get out of hand

gardens to be registered as Scheduled Tribes could materialise in the near future. But it has serious political implications. The tea garden labourers are tribals and Scheduled Caste persons,

At the same time, the Assam government has refused to concede to an identical demand by the Koch Rajbongshis, who are concentrated in Kokrajhar district and parts of Kamrup and North Lakhimpur districts. Choudhury of the Koch Rajbongshi Chhatriya Yuva Sammillan says that the population of Koch Rajbongshis is 60 lakhs, although the last census records a much lower figure. He objects to their being bracketed with the Assamese, because, according to him, culturally they have little in common with the latter, and their languages are different.

As for the Bodos, their grievances have been widely documented (see *Tribals on the warpath*, SUNDAY 26 March—1 April, 1989). Though other tribal-majority regions in the north-east have wrested a major degree of autonomy during successive reorganisations of the area since 1947, the Bodos have been left high and dry. In 1967, the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), today an unofficial ally of the AGP and an arch-enemy of the ABSU, first raised the demand for a separate state for the plains tribals along the north bank of the Brahmaputra river. The movement, however, made little headway since the PTCA leaders proved all too amenable to the carrot-and-stick policy of successive state governments.

The first major milestone in the Bodos' quest for a distinct identity was the agitation in 1973-74 for official recognition of the Bodo language, which resulted in heavy casualties. Then followed the demand by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha for a separate script—and Devanagari was eventually accepted. The acceptance of Bodo as the medium of instruction completed the process of alienation of these tribals from the Assamese, for a whole generation grew up with little or no knowledge of Assamese.

The AGP government has never had a clear policy towards the Bodo stir. State repression has provoked the agitationists to resort to greater violence, the brunt of which has been borne by innocent bystanders.

The three-year-old AGP government is today confronted by a grave crisis. On the one hand, ethnic upsurges are on the increase, and solutions must be found before they get out of hand. On the other hand, electoral compulsions, which in effect means clinging to the Assamese vote, dictate that the AGP cannot grant any demand or concession to these groups that might upset the current order.

Radhika Ramasathan/Guwahati



(Top) Student agitations like that of the Cachar tribals are common in Assam; (Inset) tribals from the Cachar region



Assamese, in the next census.

On the face of it, 'Ahomland' is as unrealistic a proposition as 'Bodoland'. For instance, both the proposed states include North Lakhimpur as part of their territory, though the Mishing tribals are a majority in the district. The Mishing organisations, in turn, want nothing to do with either 'Ahomland' or 'Bodoland'; instead, they clamour for an autonomous state for themselves.

While the cry for 'Barakland' or 'Ahomland' remains a distant dream, the demands of the Koch Rajbongshis and the labourers in the tea

whose ancestors were brought by the British from Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the early 19th century to work in the newly-opened tea gardens. Then, as now, Assamese labour was in short supply. Today, these labourers number nearly 40 lakhs and, electorally, constitute a very significant block. Their grievance is that though they are classified as Scheduled Tribes in the states from which they originally came, they have been denied this status in Assam and lumped together with other backward castes (OBCs). Thus they are denied the privileges accorded to Scheduled Tribes.

Looking inwards

Intra-party problems obsess the Congress and the Janata Dal in Uttar Pradesh even as the general election approaches

It's a strange scenario. With less than five months to go for the Lok Sabha elections, neither the Congress(I) nor the Opposition is ready to do battle in Uttar Pradesh, a state which boasts of having provided four out of the country's five

Prime Ministers. While the ruling party is busy finding ways of coping with the post-Veer Bahadur Singh situation, the Janata Dal remains a strife-riven conglomeration of factions. Uncertainty over the Dal's seat adjustments with the Bharatiya Janata Party has lent another dimension to an already complex situation.

Uttar Pradesh's political importance is evident from the number of important Congress(I) and Opposition leaders who belong to this state—Rajiv Gandhi, K.C.

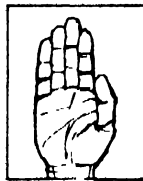
Pant, N.D. Tiwari, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar, Ajit Singh, Arif Mohammad Khan, the list goes on. From the point of view of the forthcoming polls, Uttar Pradesh will be the battleground where the ruling party and the Opposition will fight for 85 Lok Sabha seats—the high-

est among the states.

If the Opposition is divided, the ruling party does not present a picture of cohesion either. Though everyone claims that there are no factions in the Congress(I), the reality is very different. In fact, according to one senior

Congress party leader and former MLA, chief minister N.D. Tiwari is much more worried today than he was when his rival Veer Bahadur Singh was alive. Said the leader, "Earlier factions were clearly delineated and everybody knew who Veer Bahadur's men were. Today, everybody swears allegiance to Tiwari, but nobody knows who actually supports whom."

No wonder then that even a committed Veer Bahadur man like Pramod Tiwari, a minister of state, who



Though everyone claims that there are no factions in the Congress(I), the reality is very different. According to one senior leader, "Earlier factions were clearly delineated, now nobody knows who actually supports whom"

N.D. Tiwari with Rajiv Gandhi: will he be able to mobilise support for the Congress?



never tires of emphasising that the void created by the former chief minister's death will never be filled as nobody possesses Veer Bahadur's political acumen, sings paeans in praise of N.D. Tiwari. He refers to Veer Bahadur as *saarva-gunsampanna* (blessed with all the virtues) and, on the other hand, extols N.D. Tiwari as the "tallest UP politician", who commands the respect of all groups within the Congress(I).

However, there is no denying the fact that Tiwari faces a tough challenge from UPCC(I) president Balram Singh Yadav and many of his actions are aimed at containing Yadav's influence. After Veer Bahadur's death, most of his camp followers gravitated towards Balram Singh Yadav's faction while some tried to make peace with chief minister N.D. Tiwari. When Rajiv Gandhi assured the late Thakur leader's son, Fateh Bahadur Singh, of all help, Yadav lost no time in appointing the political greenhorn as joint secretary of the UPCC(I) (on 9 July) and giving him a chauffeur-driven car. That was his way of assuring Veer Bahadur's men that he would look after their interests. Significantly, no work has been assigned to the new entrant, even though he has been assigned a separate room as an office.



The Janata Dal remains a house divided. All the groups function independently and the squabble over the manner in which party posts have been distributed continues

Not to be outsmarted, N.D. Tiwari appointed Fateh Bahadur's sister, Kamla Singh, the very next day (on 10 July) as chairperson of the Mahila Kalyan Nigam with the status of a minister of state. She too has absolutely no experience, political or administrative. As she was to be married on 12 July, her appointment raised many eyebrows and even some Congressmen sneered at the 'wedding gift'.

Contrary to expectations, however, these two appointments, instead of strengthening the positions of Tiwari or Yadav, have infused new life into the Veer Bahadur lobby. Veer Bahadur's Mall Avenue residence, which has been allotted to Fateh Bahadur Singh, has



(Clockwise from left) Janata Dal UP state president Mulayam Singh Yadav does not preside over a united party. According to the Dal's Parliamentary Board chairman, Rajendra Singh, the Satpal Singh Yadav faction functions independently

once again become the scene of morning and evening durbars by committed Veer Bahadur followers. This has upset both Tiwari's and Yadav's calculations.

However, a large number of Veer Bahadur's men are sitting on the fence and only a few like Pramod Tiwari, minister of state for energy, Ram Nath Munshi, UPCC(I) general secretary, Ram Sakal Tiwari, MLA from Deoria, Trijuki Narain Misra and Kailash Prasad, both MLAs from Veer Bahadur's constituency, Gorakhpur, have made it clear where their sympathies lie. Others like Ram Nath Munshi have one foot in the Fateh Bahadur camp and the other in the Balram Singh Yadav lobby.

Most of the UPCC(I) office-bearers—Ram Nath Munshi, Ramkripal Singh and Munshi Lal Chamar (all general secretaries), Siraj Mehdi (joint secretary), Sardar Mahendra Singh (treasurer) and Rajni Dixit (joint secretary)—have been handpicked by Balram Singh Yadav and are loyal to him. On the other hand, at least 50 MLAs strongly support chief minister Tiwari.

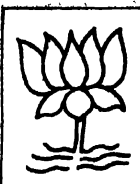
An accomplished player of the political game, Tiwari differs from Veer Bahadur in one crucial respect. He does not function with the help of an intensely loyal coterie. A very senior politician with firm roots in UP, he enjoys the respect of Congressmen belonging to many different groups. Among the ministers, those who unwaveringly support Tiwari include Jagdambika Pal (minister of state for education), Saiduzzama (minister of state for home), Baldev Singh Arya (minister for urban development), Naresh Chandra Srivastava (minister of state for urban development), Narendra Singh (minister for energy), Saidul Hasan (minister for labour), Hukum Singh (minister for food and civil supplies), O.P. Richharia (minister of state for law and legislation), Muid Ahmad (minister of state for irrigation) and Reena Kumari (deputy minister for energy). Premwati Tiwari, Ashok Sehra and Shailendra are among the MLAs committed to the Tiwari camp.

While N.D. Tiwari has been able to provide a better and cleaner administration, he lacks dynamism. Compared to Veer Bahadur, he is much less crafty. Many doubt his ability to lead the party in UP in an election year. Hukum Singh, food and civil supplies minister, is confident that the backward classes will support the Congress(I) in western UP, while in the central and eastern parts of the state, their votes will be divided between the Congress(I) and the Opposition. As far as the Muslims are concerned, he admits that although they do not back the Congress(I) as much as

they used to, they are not sympathetic to the Opposition either. Says he, "Muslims may be against the Congress(I), but they are much more against V.P. Singh. He has so far kept quiet on issues concerning the Muslims and this has annoyed them no end." Incidentally, Hukum Singh was once considered very close to the Raja of Manda.

According to rough estimates, Muslims constitute 13.4 per cent of the electorate and number approximately eight crores. The last caste census was conducted way back in 1931, according to which Brahmins formed 9.23 per cent of the electorate, Rajputs 7.8 per cent, and middle castes like the Ahir, Kurmi, Goojar and Lodhi 16.4 per cent. All projections made later are based on the 1931 figures and, according to the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), voters belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes number 1,55,99,908. The total number of Jat voters, according to this projection, is 22,27,500.

Jats will, by and large, vote for Ajit Singh's candidates in the Janata Dal. Ravindra Nath Tiwari, deputy leader of the Janata Dal Legislature Party, confidently says that Hanjans are not going to vote for the Congress(I). The BSP has a very strong presence in eastern UP districts such as Faizabad and Pratapgarh and most SC/ST officers in the services will support Kanshi Ram's outfit. Most political observers feel that if Kanshi Ram decides to go along with the



Most Dal leaders are unenthusiastic about joint campaigning with the BJP. However, the BJP feels that seat adjustments would be meaningless without it

Congress(I), he will harm his own political future. The same thing is said about Mahendra Singh Tikait, the maverick peasant leader of western UP.

The Janata Dal remains a divided house—the latest bone of contention being the announcement of state office-bearers. All the groups function independently. Rajendra Singh, chairman of the state Janata Dal Parliamentary Board, says that the Mulayam Singh Yadav faction holds its meetings separately as do Satpal Singh Yadav's group and the erstwhile Janata Party. The 20 members of the former Janata Party are again divided into two factions—with Reoti Raman Singh heading one and

Ravindra Nath Tiwari heading the other. While the Reoti Raman faction aligns itself with Mulayam Singh, Ravindra Nath Tiwari is a staunch supporter of former Janata Party president Chandra Shekhar.

Laments Rajendra Singh, "We should present a united front, but the situation is such that even V.P. Singh and Mulayam Singh are not addressing meetings in UP together. Lok Dal(A) and Lok Dal(B) should have disappeared by now, but they still exist in reality. The Mulayam Singh group does not even inform us about their meetings. This is creating a lot of problems for us."

Leaders belonging to the former Lok Dal complain that though their party was the largest among those that formed the Dal, the number of office-bearers taken from the group was equal to that from other factions. Another reason for dissatisfaction within the Dal is that Banaras has been given undue importance with three general secretaries, Narsingh Yadav, Daya Shankar Singh and Athar Jamal Lari, belonging to that place.

Most Janata Dal leaders feel that seat adjustments with the BJP would be a good idea as it would reduce the chances of a division of votes, but are not very enthusiastic about joint campaigning. Rajendra Singh says that it might scare the minorities away from the Janata Dal. Also, no Dal leader would like the BJP to be given more than ten seats in UP.

However, Rajendra Gupta, leader of the BJP legislature group in the Assembly, feels otherwise. He says that without joint campaigning, the idea of seat adjustments would be meaningless. Says he, "Joint campaigning is the precondition for seat adjustments. If a BJP candidate is contesting from a constituency and the Janata Dal workers do not come forward to support him, then this would certainly help the Congress(I). We shall campaign for the Janata Dal candidates and hope they will do the same for us."

Gupta also makes it clear that his party is making preparations to go it alone at the next Lok Sabha polls. It wants at least 35 seats, but would agree to a slightly smaller figure. According to him, the BJP is strongest in central UP and weakest in the west.

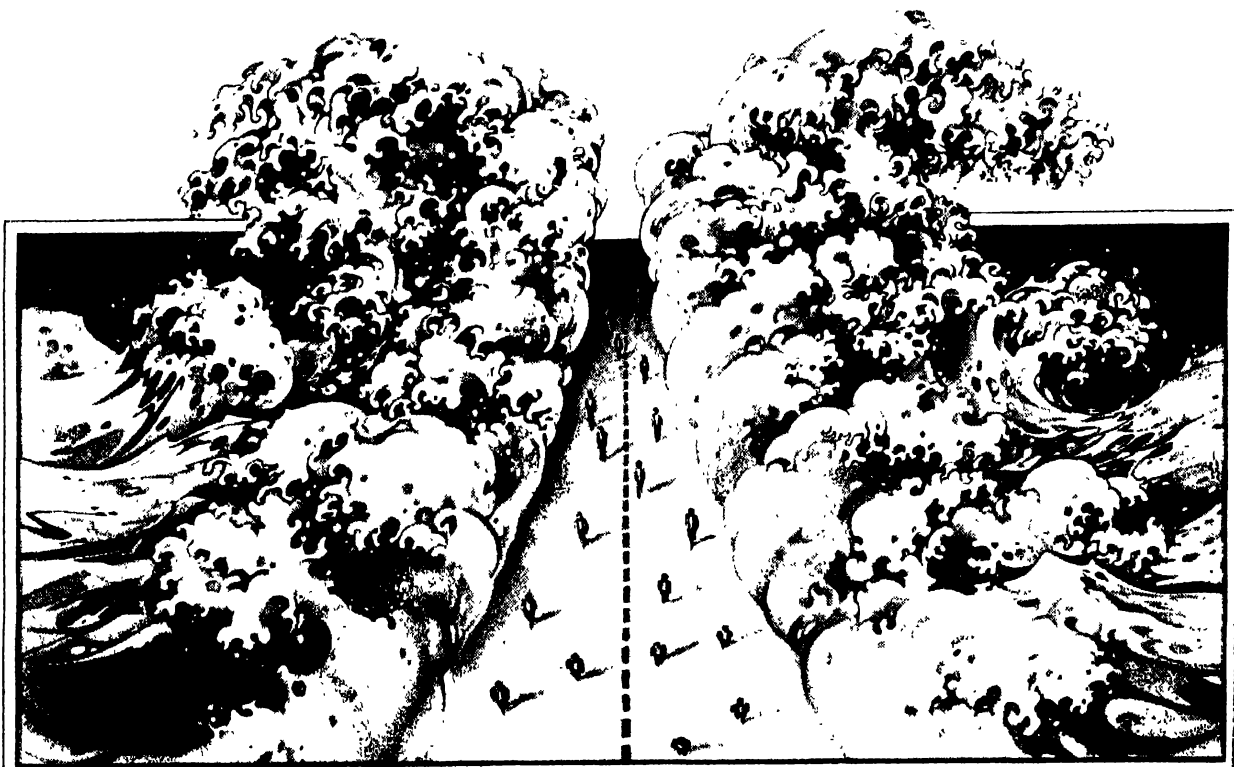
Will the BJP and the Dal finally agree on a formula for seat adjustments? Will the various factions within the Congress sink their differences and work together before the polls? The picture still remains hazy. However, one thing is certain: it is UP which will determine the shape of Indian politics in the coming months.

Kuldeep Kumar/Lucknow



(Clockwise from right) UPCC(I) president Balram Singh Yadav appointed Fateh Bahadur Singh (being comforted after his father Veer Bahadur Singh's death) state joint secretary. Not to be outdone, N. D. Tiwari made Fateh Bahadur's sister, Kamla Singh, chairperson of a woman's organisation with the rank of minister of state

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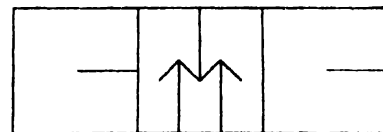
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"I pray for Sri Lanka"

Former President J.R. Jayewardene on record

Sri Lanka's former President, J.R. Jayewardene, has avoided interviews with both Sri Lankan and foreign journalists ever since he retired from office. While he was often willing to meet the press, he would insist that the conversations were strictly off the record.

Jayewardene did not (and does not) want to be publicly critical of the policies followed by his successor, President R. Premadasa. But it is no secret that he is extremely disenchanted with Premadasa's attitude to the Indo-Sri Lankan accord and the manner in which he handled the 'IPKF withdrawal' issue. Over the past few months, there have been strong and persistent rumours that a faction of the United National Party (UNP) and the military top brass are trying to bring him back to politics. There is also talk that Jayewardene (who says he has "retired") is considering a political comeback.

His decision to go on record perhaps lends weight to the credibility of such rumours. Below is one of the two (the other to a Sri Lankan publication) interviews he has given of late on political matters. Jayewardene refused to entertain any questions on President Premadasa, the differences within the ruling UNP and the crisis his country is presently in. He did talk at length, however, about the Indo-Sri Lankan accord which his President is against and wants replaced by a treaty of friendship. Here, Jayewardene offers a spirited defence of the agreement to which he was a signatory.

SUNDAY: When you signed the accord, did you imagine that such a situation may arise?

J. R. Jayewardene: How could I? Mutual trust was the important thing at that time. Rajiv had clearly told me that all the Tamil groups were willing to abide by the accord. Even Prabhakaran's. He had said that all the factions would surrender arms, give up the demand for Eelam, participate in the polls and return to the political mainstream.

And that didn't happen.

The process was begun. But when 13 LTTE members were arrested and efforts made to bring them to Colombo, they swallowed cyanide capsules. Everything started going wrong from then on.

Did Prabhakaran really agree to surrender arms?

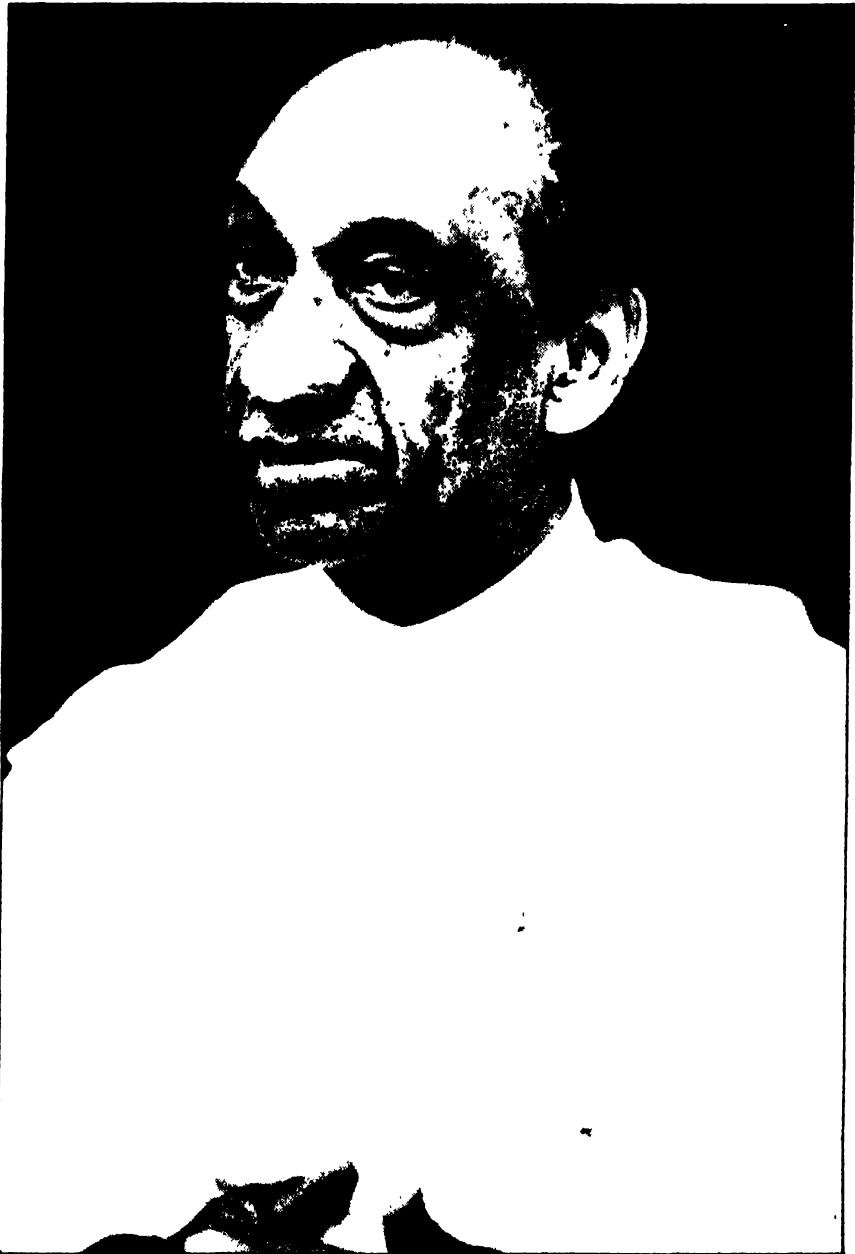
That is what Rajiv told me. He said that Prabhakaran would be brought to Jaffna by helicopter for the arms surrender. He would supervise everything. He said that if Prabhakaran and his group did not willingly agree to do this, they would be forced to fall in line. Now we realise

J. R. Jayewardene: "I am a retired person now"

that they did not surrender all their arms. Nor were they happy with the accord.

Any accord should have been between you and the Tamils with India as a witness or guarantor. Why did you sign an agreement with India?

You see, before the accord we wanted to take control of Jaffna. But we



couldn't. Our general had told me that this would be a very difficult task. We lost three battalions of soldiers in the attempt. Even if we had taken control, it would have been very difficult to retain it. The battle in the north-east was causing a lot of damage to the country. I was looking for a solution. America, Britain, Pakistan, Israel—I was asking each of them for help. But nobody really came forward. Rajiv was keen. How could I sign a pact with the Tamil groups! They are murderers. That is why I signed the accord with India. For a long time India had been providing money, weapons, training and shelter to the Tamil groups. So I wanted to make a pact with India to solve the problem. I do not think I made a mistake.

You were talking of taking control of Jaffna.

It would have been impossible. Besides, the Indian high commissioner, J. N. Dixit, had clearly told Lalith (Athulathmudali), "If you try to take control of Jaffna, we will not let it happen." That is why I signed an accord with those who were giving the Tamils shelter.

Even after that the Tamil groups continued to fight among themselves.

Everyone knows that Prabhakaran was M. G. Ramachandran's hit squad, as the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) is Karunanidhi's. They have finished us.

Why didn't R. Premadasa (who was the Prime Minister at that time) support the agreement then?

Who said he did not support it? I had told the entire Cabinet everything. Only on one question did I alone take a decision. That was about the temporary merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, which, according to the accord, was supposed to be decided by a referendum. The Cabinet was in the know about everything else. Only on that one point can I be criticised.

Then why did Premadasa talk about the withdrawal of the IPKF?

That is not an event which occurred at the time of signing of the accord. (Smiles) This is a new development. If I answer this question, it might lead to a controversy. Therefore... Yes, the withdrawal of the IPKF has nothing to do

with the devolution of powers.

How is that?

See the accord (*opens a copy of the agreement*). There is no clause in the accord which links the devolution of powers to the presence of the IPKF. Nowhere does it say that till the process of devolution is complete, the IPKF will remain in this country. The devolution is still going on. The implementation of the accord is a long-term affair.

Elections to the provincial councils were held after the signing of the accord. It is the Sri Lankan government which has had to provide houses and cars to the provincial councillors. Other things will happen in time. But there is no

Parliament. Is this a small achievement?

But Prabhakaran was not a part of this. And it is his group that is the largest.

That is why I said the accord has been only 90 per cent successful. If only one man is to be blamed for the present situation, it is Prabhakaran.

Did Rajiv Gandhi fail to understand Prabhakaran's real nature?

It seems so. But what could I do? If those under whose protection Prabhakaran gained in strength could not see through him, how could I?

It is said that during his 'imprisonment' in Delhi's Ashok Hotel,



"The accord has been 90 per cent successful. If only one man is to be blamed for the present situation, it is Prabhakaran"

Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene sign the Indo-Sri Lankan accord

clause in the accord which says that the IPKF must stay to ensure that they do. Remember, the Indian army did not come here under the terms of the accord—it came at my invitation, to hasten the process of arms surrender. In the beginning, there were not many soldiers. Later, when the LTTE violated the accord, more troops were brought in. And devolution of powers? It will take place.

What do you feel about the accord now?

(Smiles) It all seems like a cartoon—not one, but two. In the first, Prabhakaran and I are boxing in a ring with Rajiv Gandhi as the referee. In the next, Rajiv and Prabhakaran are fighting, while I am one of the audience.

Enjoying this?

Not at all, since the fight is on our soil.

How successful do you think the accord has been?

Ninety per cent. The accord ended the war in the country. It is because of it that some Tamil groups participated in elections and embraced the concept of parliamentary democracy. Many belonging to these groups are members of

Prabhakaran expressed his objections to the accord.

I don't know. I did not talk to them. Negotiations were conducted by Rajiv's men. It was Rajiv who told me that everyone was willing. And that Prabhakaran would be brought by helicopter... Why should I have disbelieved him? I had trusted Rajiv. Besides, Prabhakaran had come.

Do you regret signing the accord?

Of course not. In the prevailing situation, anyone would have been eager to sign that kind of an accord. I have no regrets.

Many say that you tricked Rajiv Gandhi into signing the accord.

That is wrong. None of us lacked sincerity. No one won, no one lost.

There is talk in India of a Cyprus-type solution.

I have already said I will not comment on any controversial issue. I am a retired person now.

Then you are not worried about your country?

Of course I am, I praying for it.

Interviewed by Saumya Bandyopadhyay/Colombo

Dead or alive?

Was Prabhakaran murdered or is the LTTE bluffing?

It has been a month for assassinations. Hardly had the shock over the brutal murders of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leaders been overcome, when news came of the killing of Uma Maheswaran, the chief of the militant Peoples Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). Now there are indications that the leader of the outfit that is suspected of the other assassinations—V. Prabhakaran of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—has been killed.

In a sense, the news of Prabhakaran's murder was the most shocking. Both the TULF leaders, for instance, lived in fear of their lives, with the LTTE having passed a 'death sentence' on them a few years ago. And Maheswaran, a former LTTE leader, was a marked man ever

portraits to express grief."

Then, Varadaraja Perumal, the EPRLF chief minister of Sri Lanka's North-Eastern Province, declared that there was convincing evidence of Prabhakaran's death. He claimed that the LTTE's former Jaffna commander, Krishnakumar ('Kittu'), had died along with Prabhakaran in the same assault. Kittu had lost his right leg a couple of years ago in a grenade attack, for which Prabhakaran and Mahatayya were suspected to be responsible.

Prabhakaran's demise seemed even more certain after reports which quoted Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) officers as saying that they had evidence which suggested that the LTTE chief had been killed. Although the Indian government, like its counterpart in Sri

murdering Prabhakaran—remained silent. If the LTTE did not want to confuse its cadres, then surely something more than a routine denial was called for, it was argued.

Yet, as the days went by, there seemed reason to believe that the LTTE supremo was alive and that stories about his death were motivated. Tamil Nadu's chief minister, M. Karunanidhi, who initially believed that Prabhakaran was no more, suddenly announced that he knew for a fact that the Tiger leader was alive. When newsmen asked him how he had come to know this, he replied enigmatically, "I am giving you the news."

A little later, officials of Rupavaham, the Sri Lankan government-owned television network, claimed that they were trying to end the rumours by arranging for Prabhakaran to appear on the box.

In Madras, the Tamil militant groups which announced Prabhakaran's death also became curiously reluctant to talk about the issue. Questions put to them were invariably met with evasive replies, such as, "We don't want to make further comments on this." The 'evidence' to suggest that Prabhakaran was alive gained strength when a foreign office spokesman said on 28 July that, while India had no confirmation of his death, there was "reason to believe that stories about this so-called death have emanated from the LTTE itself".

The mystifying question was why the LTTE should have undertaken to spread the rumour that its leader had been killed. It is difficult to say, but the most popular theory is that the Tigers wanted to gain sympathy and defuse the criticism for the murders of the two TULF leaders in Colombo. The killing of Amir-thalingam and Yogeswaran did, as their funerals in Jaffna revealed, evoke a considerable amount of grief and earned the LTTE a bad name. The Tigers, the theory went, wanted to detract attention from the murders by claiming that one of their own had been done in too.

It is hard to say with any certainty what the true picture is at the time of going to press. But at the end of last week, Prabhakaran's death, which seemed almost certain at the time it was announced, appeared more and more as a disingenuous ploy to exorcise the memory of the other assassinations.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras



Prabhakaran (right) with Mahatayya: murder or mischief?

At the end of last week, the rumours of Prabhakaran's death seemed more and more like a disingenuous ploy to exorcise the memory of the other assassinations

since he fell out with Prabhakaran and formed his own group. Moreover, Prabhakaran enjoyed an image of indestructibility—one that had gained strength after years of having survived both the Sri Lankan and the Indian armies.

News of his death was first put out by the rival militant organisation, the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), which claimed that the LTTE supremo was shot dead by his deputy Ajith Mahatayya in the Vavuniya jungles on 20 July. Later, the EPRLF said that arrangements were being made to take Prabhakaran's body to Valvettithurai, his native town in the Jaffna peninsula. Said the party's spokesman in Madras, "They are mourning his death. They are flying black flags and putting out his garlanded

Lanka, didn't officially confirm this, an external affairs spokesman admitted: "There is mounting evidence that Prabhakaran is dead."

The LTTE denied the rumours though. Its London office said that its leader was alive and well and dismissed all talk otherwise as motivated rumour. "They are telling lies," its statement went. "All this is deliberate false propaganda done by the Government of India and the EPRLF to confuse our cadres. Prabhakaran is quite well and so are Kittu and Mahatayya."

Initially, the statement did not seem convincing. It was reasoned that if Prabhakaran was alive, the least he could have done was to issue a statement to this effect. It also seemed odd that Mahatayya—the man accused of

All among the Lals

While Bansil Lal and Bhajan Lal squabble, Devi Lal makes the best of it

The battle for Haryana has begun in earnest. The irrepressible Bansil Lal pitted against his arch-rival, Union agriculture minister Bhajan Lal. Both of them obviously think that Devi Lal's Janata Dal government is no match for the might of the Congress(I). Why else would the two senior Congress leaders from Haryana fight each other when logic demands that Bansil and Bhajan Lal should close ranks to take on Devi Lal?

But personal gains have always taken precedence over party interests in the Congress(I)'s scheme of things. After the humiliating defeat of the Bansil Lal-led Congress(I) government in the Assembly elections in 1987, the political fortunes of Bansil Lal dipped. Blamed for failing to counter the growing influence of Devi Lal, Bansil Lal fell from Rajiv Gandhi's grace and was sent to political wilderness.

The situation was godsend for another political heavyweight from Haryana: Bhajan Lal. The Union agriculture minister utilised Bansil Lal's absence to regroup his followers in the state. But just when political observers had written off Bansil Lal, the former chief minister is staging a comeback. But with Bhajan Lal ranged against him and Devi Lal's influence showing no signs of waning, Bansil Lal indeed has a tough battle in hand.

Bansil Lal is a great competitor and has started his comeback campaign with all seriousness. The former chief minister has been touring the state extensively to garner support and in the last six months alone, he has organised as many as 12 big public rallies in different parts of Haryana. In fact, Bansil Lal fired his first salvo from the public meeting at Palwal in November last. The rally was not only well-attended, it was addressed by no less a politician than Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, also a former chief minister. But to everyone's surprise, Sharma, who was expected to criticise chief minister Devi Lal, ended up lashing out at Bhajan Lal instead.

Political observers, however, feel that

it is not Bhajan Lal but the newly-appointed Jat president of the state Congress(I) unit, Shamsher Singh Surjewala, who is Bansil Lal's real target.

The Congress(I) high command too is reportedly backing Surjewala to the hilt. Soon after he was appointed the PCC(I) president in December 1988, Surjewala reconstituted the demoralised and faction-ridden state unit and rejuvenated the grassroots workers. The new president also launched an all-out offensive against Devi Lal. Mass rallies and

another shock early this year when the Surjewala-Bhajan Lal combine succeeded in appointing Chakravarti Sharma as the president of the Haryana Youth Congress(I). The Youth Congress too has been organising rallies in different parts of the state to garner support for the PCC(I) president and Bhajan Lal.

It is a bitter battle that the two factions of the Congress(I) in Haryana are fighting. Devoid of new issues, both groups are now trying to impress upon the high command that their rivals are

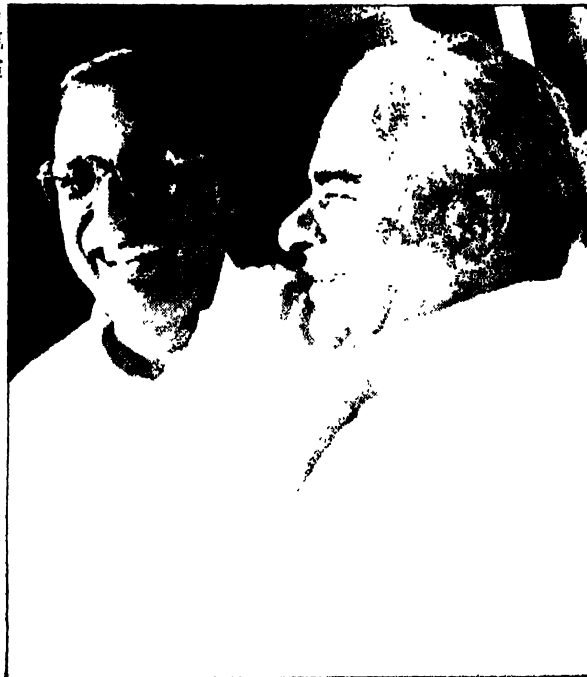
hand-in-glove with Devi Lal. Supporters of Bhajan Lal are trying to sell the idea that Bansil Lal and Devi Lal have reached an understanding that the leadership of Haryana should remain with the Jats. Bansil Lal's cronies on the other hand are alleging that it is Bhajan Lal who is close to the Haryana chief minister, Devi Lal.

Whatever be the merits of the allegations and counter-allegations, one thing is certain: Bansil Lal has been pushed to the wall by Surjewala and Bhajan Lal. And, by virtue of being a Union minister, Bhajan Lal has been able to convince the decision-makers in Delhi that Bansil Lal is actually doing more harm to the party's prospects in Haryana. Bansil Lal, on the other hand, is finding it more and more difficult even to get an audience with the high command so that he is able to explain his side of the story.

But the damage to the Congress(I)'s prospects has already been done and Devi Lal is enjoying the battle of attrition between Bansil Lal and Bhajan Lal. The Haryana chief minister's followers have even framed the line of argument that the Janata Dal will be taking in the forthcoming polls. It runs thus: "Bansil Lal will bring with him the atrocities he committed during the Emergency. Bhajan Lal will bring back the reign of the corrupt, and Surjewala is not yet competent enough to run the state."

It seems that Devi Lal could well afford to leave the affairs of the state to his deputies and concentrate on the national scene.

Anil Tyagi/Chandigarh



Bansil Lal (left) with Bhajan Lal: bitter exchanges

padayatras were held regularly to highlight the inefficiency of the Janata Dal government. What is more, Surjewala succeeded in winning over at least one of the feuding Lals—Bhajan Lal.

That left Bansil Lal alone and with no option but to fight for his political survival. There is, however, another reason for Bansil Lal's sudden resurgence. Surjewala is an upcoming Jat leader and Bansil Lal is well aware of his growing clout. If Surjewala is allowed to expand his base in the state, Bansil Lal may well have to retire, feel political observers. Bhajan Lal diplomatically avoided a confrontation by pledging support to Surjewala.

The Bansil Lal camp received yet

CHECKED?

The Opposition forces Rajiv Gandhi on the defensive. Can he fight back?

Rajiv Gandhi and his trusty Congressmen were on the gangway, political cutlasses raised. This was to be the last dust-up in the Lok Sabha before the next elections, their last opportunity to tear the motley Opposition to shreds. But just when the dramatics were about to begin, the Opposition did the unexpected. It retreated. In an unprecedented show of unity, almost the entire Opposition resigned, leaving the bamboozled Congress(I) thrashing out at thin air. It was the Opposition's brief moment of glory. Without lifting a finger, it made the Congress(I) look a bully denied the opportunity to use brute force.

The ruling party was clearly upstaged. The fight was now out in the open. And the Congress(I) could no longer cover up its acts of commission by shouting down the Opposition within the confines of Parliament. It was now faced with the daunting task of trying to convince the electorate of its innocence in the contentious Bofors issue that has haunted Rajiv Gandhi for the greater part of his tenure. And the Opposition, for once, could claim full credit for forcing the ruling party to go on the defensive. For, the Opposition shrewdly used the latest indictment (by the Comptroller and Auditor General—CAG) of the government for its role in the Bofors deal to make its point. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I) government, the Opposition shouted, had time and again been held guilty of corruption in the Bofors deal and yet nothing had been able to bring them to book. Opposition members successfully made out that they were resigning *en masse* from the Lok Sabha in symbolic protest against this brazen disregard for political propriety.

The Opposition had another reason to crow. The resignation drama flagged off their election campaign on a high belligerent note. Said Congress(S) MP K.P. Unnikrishnan, "For a hundred MPs, the election campaign has already begun without elections being announced. Immediately after the session is over, we will all be returning to our constituencies to take the issue to every village and town." And all the Congress(I) could summon up, in contrast, was indignation. Congress(I) MP N.K.P. Salve said in disgust, "While the Opposition is talking about the CAG, how can they justify breaking microphones in Parliament, gathering in the well and rebuking Rajiv Gandhi? I hope the bluff of the Opposition will be effectively called." But hoping is not going to help. To fight back, the Congress(I) leadership will need political brain and not brawn.

What, in fact, landed the Congress(I) in its present predicament was the lack of political acuity. The story of how Rajiv Gandhi bungled begins on 27 April this year when the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, T.N. Chaturvedi, submitted his audit report on the Bofors case to the government. The report was not tabled in Parliament at that time, although it should have been, and, on the last day of the budget session (15 May), the Prime Minister said the President had returned the report and the government needed three weeks to "process" it before tabling it in Parliament. This, in retrospect, was Rajiv Gandhi's first mistake. "The Prime Minister," says Janata Dal MP Jaipal Reddy, "was wrong even at that stage, because the government is not supposed to change even a single comma of the CAG. There is no processing to be done." The government, he



says, obviously thought it could influence Chaturvedi to tone down the report. As it is, the government tried to minimise the possibility of damage by effectively neutering the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which takes up reports prepared by the CAG. Jaipal Reddy was denied the chairmanship of the PAC and AIADMK MP P. Kolandaivelu appointed instead. Nine-

teen Opposition MPs resigned from the PAC and other parliamentary finance committees in protest. They rightly pointed out that the PAC is a statutory body that should be chaired by a member of the 'genuine' Opposition. Kolandaivelu would not do because his party had an alliance with the ruling Congress(I).

Had Rajiv Gandhi tabled the CAG

report during the budget session, the Opposition might not have been able to sustain the Bofors issue or make it a major election plank. A section of the Congress(I) feels that if Rajiv Gandhi had the slightest inkling of the mass resignations, he would have dissolved the House and announced early elections. In that event, the CAG report would have been buried and possibly forgotten. But now, as Jaipal Reddy puts it, "the 20-page paragraph 11 of the CAG report has come as a crushing finale to the two-year-old Bofors controversy. Bofors is a prurient and persistent scandal that refuses to go away." And right from the day the report was tabled (on 18 July, 1989), the Opposition knew it was on to a great thing.

From then on, events overtook the Opposition. Almost before they knew it,



Rajiv Gandhi; (inset)
Devi Lal, V.P. Singh and
NTR: heightened
confrontation

disparate Opposition groups were drawn into a scheme that snowballed into a major unity move. When Opposition MPs met on 19 July, they agreed that something had to be done, but could think of nothing less banal than insisting on Rajiv Gandhi's resignation and continuing to stall the proceedings of the Lok Sabha. Telugu Desam sources recall that the idea of doing something "drastic" was Andhra Pradesh chief minister N.T. Rama Rao's. But even NTR could not figure out what precisely should be done and it was left to his lieutenant, P. Upendra, to suggest that mass resignation was the best course of action. Most MPs were flabbergasted and initially dismissed the idea as absurd. The next evening, the MPs met again and could think of nothing better. Jaipal Reddy says the predominant mood was one of utter dejection and frustration.

It was NTR who finally decided to take the plunge. He called up Upendra on 21 July morning and told him that the resignation idea was on and that all

Telugu Desam MPs should resign. The task now was to persuade the other parties to follow suit. As it turned out, NTR's decision set the ball rolling faster than he had imagined perhaps. For instance, Jyoti Basu, when contacted by Upendra, jumped at the idea; although CPI(M) Politburo chief, E.M.S. Namboodiripad's response to the proposal was somewhat lukewarm. The BJP too was initially non-committal. V.P. Singh, on the other hand, responded enthusiastically. Cutting short his Bihar trip, Singh and other Janata Dal leaders rushed back to New Delhi in Haryana chief minister Devi Lal's aircraft. In the meantime, NTR spoke to Tamil Nadu's DMK chief minister M. Karunanidhi and V.P. Singh contacted Asom Gana Parishad leader Dinesh Goswami. Everything began falling into place swiftly.

Namboodiripad, who was on a Kerala tour, returned to Delhi and, after a closed-door meeting with Politburo comrades, told V.P. Singh that his party favoured the resignation idea, but would make a final announcement only after conferring with the other left parties — the CPI, the Forward Bloc and the RSP. On the morning of 23 July, both NTR and Jyoti Basu arrived in Delhi. Both leaders managed to convince their respective parties to go with the proposal and on 11.30 am of the same day, the National Front constituents, including the Telugu Desam, the Janata Dal, the Asom Gana Parishad and the DMK, formally endorsed the resignation proposal.

The next day, seven minutes after the commencement of question hour in the Lok Sabha, as many as 69 MPs belonging to the right, centre and left Opposition handed over their resignations to

Speaker Balram Jakhar. As P. Upendra told SUNDAY, "It was the quickest and smoothest operation that the Opposition has ever seen." Leaders belonging to both the Janata Dal and the Telugu Desam agree on one point that after NTR, it was Jyoti Basu who did the most for making the proposal a reality. The CPI(M) leads the four-party left group in the Lok Sabha, which happens to be the largest Opposition group with 33 MPs (CPI-M 22, CPI 6, RSP 3 and Forward Bloc 2).

As far as the BJP was concerned, it had no problem as it had only two Lok Sabha seats to sacrifice and clearly everything to gain politically. Besides, relations between the Janata Dal and the BJP had considerably improved since V.P. Singh's tête-à-tête with L.K. Advani over dinner a few weeks earlier. The BJP seemed to have realised that Singh's confusing and self-contradictory statements on the issue of seat adjustments were prompted more by a desire to pare down the BJP's demand for seats than a question of principles.

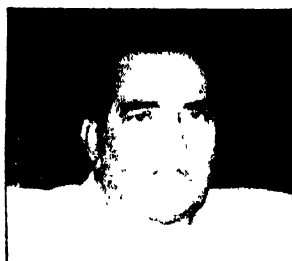
The Opposition finally indicated that it is prepared to put up an honest, credible fight against the Congress(I). Not merely did it exhume the corruption and Bofors issues, but it also proved that it could work unitedly. This spoke of a new determination amongst Opposition members. Especially because the resignation decision spelled hard times for many of them. Each Opposition MP stands to lose over Rs 50,000 in hard cash in salaries and other benefits. First-term MPs who resigned will not be entitled to the life-long pension given to MPs who serve a full term. K.P. Unnikrishnan points out that "not all the

MPs have financial backing and property back home like some of us. It has been a great sacrifice for some of them." Ram Dhan refused to give up his seat for simple financial reasons. He told Janata Dal leaders that he would not be able to bear the financial strain since he had a large family to support and no other source of income. Janata Dal MPs too are worried. "The coffers of our party are empty, thanks mainly to the campaign for clean government which V.P. Singh has been carrying on," says a distraught Dal MP. "Today, not even a capitalist crow comes to sit on the roof of his house."

But even the most impecunious of

The Opposition: together on Bofors, but can it agree on seat adjustments?

THE RESIGNATION RESORT *How the Opposition got its act together*



N.T. Rama Rao

19 JULY 1989

- N.T. Rama Rao suggests that something dramatic be done to draw attention to the CAG's indictment of the government on the Bofors purchase.
- P. Upendra, Telugu Desam, moots the mass resignation proposal.

21 JULY

- V.P. Singh cuts short his Bihar tour and flies back to New Delhi.

22 JULY

- Dinesh Goswami, AGP, convinces his colleagues to go along with the move.
- DMK chief M. Karunanidhi welcomes the resignation proposal.

23 JULY

- Jyoti Basu rushes to Delhi to

Jyoti Basu



(L to r) K.P. Unnikrishnan, L.K. Advani, V.P. Singh and Namboodiripad

convince the CPI(M) Politburo.

- NTR arrives in Delhi.
- Left party leaders—E.M.S. Namboodiripad (CPI-M), Rajeswara Rao (CPI), Chitta Basu (Forward Bloc) and Tridib Roychowdhury (RSP)—endorse the resignation decision.
- BJP's L.K. Advani tells V.P. Singh that his party is game.
- Congress(S) leader, K.P.

Unnikrishnan, expresses enthusiasm for the joint move.

- The stage is set for the mass resignation of Opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha.

24 JULY

- 73 Opposition MPs submit their resignations to Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar.
- Other Opposition MPs resign later.



Poll arithmetic

The Congress(I) stands to lose in a one-to-one electoral contest

The dramatic coming together of opposition groups spells bad news for the Congress(I). In past electoral battles, a straight contest between the Congress(I) and the Opposition always favoured the latter. The general elections in 1977—regarded as the most crucial since Independence—and the one in 1980 are classic examples.

The 1977 parliamentary elections

showed, for the first time, how a united Opposition could easily defeat the Congress. In the politically sensitive state of Uttar Pradesh, which sends 85 members to the Lok Sabha, there was a straight fight between the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD)—the main Opposition front at that time—and the Congress. The left parties put up a few candidates (the CPI 13 and the CPI-M 2), but none of them made the slightest dent. The BLD swept the polls, winning all the seats, and securing more than 50 per cent of the votes.

The 1980 elections, which returned Mrs Gandhi to power, once again showed how a split in Opposition votes helps the Congress(I). An analysis of the voting trend in 70 out of 85 Uttar Pradesh seats showed that the split in the Janata Party swung the votes in favour of the Congress(I). Computerised data illustrate that the Janata and the Janata(S) (Janata-secular, formed by Charan Singh and Raj Narain) together got 50 per cent of the votes, as against the Congress' 35 per cent in these 70 constituencies. The Rampur Lok Sabha constituency results illustrate the point. In 1977, the BLD candidate, R.K. Sharma, secured 57.2 per cent of the votes, defeating his nearest rival, the Congress candidate, Z.A. Khan, who got 36 per cent of the votes. In 1980, Z.A. Khan won, getting 46 per cent of the votes. His rivals, M. Rehman of the Janata(S) and R.K. Sharma of the Janata, together got 49.1 per cent of the votes.

The June 1988 byelections provided further proof that one-to-one contests were unlucky for the Congress(I). The byelection results indicated that while the Congress could no longer bank on the 'sympathy wave', the Opposition also had little to be complacent about, as there was no anti-Congress wave sweeping the country. The Opposition was able to forge a united front in the key state of Uttar Pradesh, with the Lok Dal withdrawing its candidate in the Chhaprauli Assembly constituency in favour of the Janata Party which, in turn, supported the Lok Dal candidate in the Tanda Assembly bypoll. In Allahabad, V.P. Singh was the combined Opposition candidate. The Opposition, predictably, trounced the Congress in all three seats.

The Congress(I), in contrast, scored in the Pali and Khetri bypolls because of the split in Opposition votes. The Congress(I) retained the Pali parliamentary seat when its candidate, Shankar Lal, a former MLA, defeated the BJP candidate, Guman Lal Lodha, former Chief Justice of the Guwahati High Court, by a margin of 39,205 votes. The Lok Dal fielded Sukh Lal Soncha, another former MLA, who polled only 73,134 votes. He as well as six Independents lost their deposits. In the Khetri seat, the BJP was defeated because of the division in Opposition ranks. By now, the lessons are clear. The question is whether the Opposition has learnt them well enough to put them into practice.

Pratibha Chatterjee

Opposition MPs realised that there was no alternative. Prakash Karat, CPI(M) secretariat member, explains that there would have been no point in participating in the discussions since the ruling party would have given an impression of fair, democratic functioning and, in the end, voted out the issue with the help of its brute majority. The Congress(I) would have then told the electorate that the CAG report was based on wrong assumptions and had been rejected by Parliament. Upendra adds that the defence ministry had already prepared a detailed rebuttal of the CAG report and that Congress(I) members would have used the prepared defence to undermine the report's contentions.

The Congress(I), in the circumstances, was understandably upset. Most Congressmen tried to make the Opposition out to be a bunch of escapist.

"They (the Opposition) had no leg to stand on," claims N.K.P. Salve, the briefless Congress(I) MP, who has made a vocation of attacking the CAG. "If they had gone in for a discussion on the CAG report two things would have been exposed," feels Salve. "That there is no indictment of Rajiv Gandhi or his government by the CAG and that no inference of corruption can be made merely by its statement that commissions have been paid. The CAG does not touch upon the matter of corruption." Anand Sharma, who initiated the discussion on the CAG report, added, "The very essence of democracy is debate. By refusing to have a discussion on the subject, the Opposition has embarked on an escapist route."

Congressmen, however, omitted to mention that during the current session, it was Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who

had played truant. Opposition MPs recall that by the end of the first week of the current Parliament session (21 July), the mood was of utter frustration. The Prime Minister kept away during the time Opposition members were at their provocative worst and Congress(I) members were viciously attacking the office of the CAG. Said Jaipal Reddy, "If the Congress(I) had offered to appoint a house committee to look into the CAG report, they would have taken the wind out of our sails. Such a concession would have also given the Opposition a cushion to fall back on. Instead, the government was in a state of paralysis which led us to take the radical decision."

The Congress(I), at any rate, was shell-shocked. It was only after the resignations that the ruling party began working out some sort of a strategy to counter the Opposition victory. The

counter-attack consisted of first dragging V.P. Singh into the controversy—since he had approved the Bofors deal both in his capacity as the finance minister and as a member of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA). Union defence minister K.C. Pant, who was called to counter some of the Opposition's arguments, stated in Parliament that the Bofors deal had been the "special responsibility of the (then) finance minister". Pant added that there was not even "a shred of evidence" in the report to indict the Prime Minister.

But it was evident that the Congress(I) was somewhat at a loss. Anand Sharma, for instance, belatedly pointed out that "the Opposition has shown double standards throughout the episode". He said that in the current session of Parliament the CAG presented a report on the functioning of the government in Andhra Pradesh. The report exposed how Rs 27 crores, which had been given as a grant for flood relief by the Centre, was siphoned off for purchasing air-conditioners and such things by the state leadership. "In the light of the findings of the CAG, NTR should have resigned before asking for the resignation of the Prime Minister," he said. Moreover, "if the Opposition wanted the people to believe that they had committed a great sacrifice by resigning, 99 Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha too should have resigned," Sharma added.

All the Congress(I) voices have, however, not been able to match the dramatic manner in which the Opposition made its point. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is consequently faced with a real dilemma. On the one hand, he has to demolish the corruption issue wrapped around the Bofors spectre, while, on the other, he has to give an attractive election present to the voters. He had been hoping to use the 'Panchayati Raj' plan and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana as his principal election planks. But now it will be difficult to do so. For, the Opposition has successfully shifted public attention back to corruption. Besides, the Congress(I) is in a bit of a quandary about how to pass the Panchayati Raj Amendment Bill in the absence of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. After all, pushing through a major Bill without real debate would seem somewhat of a sham.

A section of Congressmen, nevertheless, feels that the Panchayati Raj Bill should be pushed through. It argues that if Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha boycott the constitutional amendment (relating to Panchayati Raj), then the Congress(I) would stand to gain. In

that event, Congressmen feel they could always argue that their party is keen to give real power to the people, whereas the Opposition is merely interested in denigrating the institution of Parliament and showering the Prime Minister with unsubstantiated allegations. The All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I) is also reported to have suggested that the party's propaganda machinery should be geared up to counter the Opposition's charges on Bofors. The Congress(I) is contemplating printing the speeches of party MPs attacking the CAG report; the CAG, Chaturvedi, is to be constantly denigrated; and Congressmen are to hold street-corner meetings throughout the country to disprove the Opposition's charges against the Prime Minister.

blame. A large section of Congressmen in Delhi secretly castigate Union home minister Buta Singh, who, they claim, was responsible for the Prime Minister's absence in the Lok Sabha during the time the Opposition was creating a furore over the CAG report. Senior party leaders like external affairs minister P.V. Narasimha Rao had apparently been of the opinion that the Prime Minister should be present in the Lok Sabha to defend himself the day after the CAG report was tabled. But Buta Singh it seems shot down the suggestion.

To disguise the gloom in their high command, lesser Congress(I) leaders are trying to put up a brave front. "The Congress," assures Anand Sharma, "will not go down without a fight. In March



N K P. SALVE

"While the Opposition is talking about the CAG, how can they justify breaking microphones in Parliament?"



ANAND SHARMA

"The essence of democracy is debate. By refusing to have a discussion on the subject, the Opposition has embarked on an escapist route"



K.C. PANT

"Can the Opposition point to even a single reference or aspersion being cast on the Prime Minister by the CAG?"

According to one suggestion, the Congress(I) should emphasise how the CAG has insinuated that the army chief is a liar and how such controversies are harming the country's security interests. Congress(I) MP Salve feels that this approach, coupled with disclosures on V.P. Singh's role in the Bofors deal, will compel voters to think twice before swallowing the Opposition line.

Rajiv Gandhi is the man on the line. He was the person responsible for precipitating the parliamentary crisis and, in the ultimate analysis, he, as the Prime Minister, has to undo the harm. Unfortunately, his party leaders are not exactly brimming with ideas on how best he can counter the Opposition fire. For the moment, senior Congress(I) leaders are busier trying to establish who is to

1977, the party had reached rock-bottom and commanded only 32 per cent of the seats in Parliament. Our position today is nowhere near the difficult days of 1977." Other Congressmen glibly maintain that, whatever else, Opposition unity will never last, that the left parties and the mainstream Opposition will soon fall out on ideological issues. But most Congressmen seem to feel that the entire resignation drama was inconsequential and will not make any impression on the ordinary voter. As Congress(I) MP Salve put it: "Today, the Opposition is in a state of euphoria and they feel they have made a political dent and tarnished the image of the Prime Minister. I concede that it might appear so, but the Indian voter is a mature man unlikely to fall prey to any gimmick once

it is exposed."

The tragic part is that Salve might just be proved right. And, in the end, Rajiv Gandhi might find himself home and dry without the slightest effort on his part—Bofors, CAG and corruption notwithstanding. For, the Opposition's unity act has still not covered the many cracks within: the divergent ideologies, personality clashes and competing ambitions. In fact, the problems were apparent right from the beginning. For one, even if it is argued that all the groups that matter in Opposition politics did resign, it still remains to be seen if they continue to act as one.

A major problem is the animosity between the leftist CPI(M) and the

idea of unity at any cost. He has subsequently been using every occasion to press home this point; and this is one reason why the left parties have given their own separate call for observing 9 August as 'Save India Day' and 30 August as 'Bharat bandh'.

In the same way, the BJP too has stuck to its lone path and has given a separate call for similar programmes on the same dates. Both the CPI(M) and the BJP have chosen an abstruse way of pointing out that while they are willing to go along with major unity moves, they are separate entities, with their own identities ideologies and political strategies. The BJP, in the present circumstances, can continue to propagate its extreme views on the conten-

week. "I have not decided whether to resign," he told SUNDAY. According to the MP, who recently hit the headlines for calling a National Political Convention of Muslim Indians, neither he nor Ram Dhan was asked for an opinion on the resignation move. Upendra, apparently, called him at the last moment and told him that NTR required his presence at a meeting of Opposition leaders who had decided to resign. "Since my party was not seized of the matter, nor were we informed about the move earlier, I declined, saying I did not qualify to attend such a meeting. Prof. Dandavate rang me up in the morning, the day the resignations took place, and told me that even if I was not planning to resign, I should be absent during the question hour. For old times' sake, I heeded Prof. Dandavate's request," said Shahabuddin.

G.M. Banatwala and Sulaiman Sait, Muslim League MPs, did not resign from the Lok Sabha. Banatwala said that the Opposition action was "hollow". He said if the Opposition was sincere it should have resigned from the Rajya Sabha too. The Muslim League MPs obviously could do little else because the party has an alliance with the Congress in Kerala.

Having been denied a berth and a say in Janata Dal affairs, Shahabuddin is now trying to form his own pressure group. Unlike Subramaniam Swamy and Ram Dhan who are in a similar situation, Shahabuddin has the potential of emerging as a key factor in the polls, especially in the matter of the Muslim votebank. Both the Dal and the Congress(I) realise this and both are hoping to seduce the Muslim voter. During the last five years, the Muslims are thought to have steadily veered away from the Congress(I), thanks to the Meerut riots and the Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi dispute. During the Allahabad byelection, the Muslims supported V.P. Singh. But now with the Dal inching towards the BJP, there is no telling which way the Muslim voter will swing. And this cannot be good news for the Opposition.

But then, the Indian Opposition has perpetually been caught in similar contradictions. One reason why it is has rarely emerged as a credible, cohesive whole, capable of taking on the Congress(I), is the fatal divisions of ideology and individuality. The resignation move was clearly one of its most masterful strokes ever. But quitting the Lok Sabha as one united group was hard enough, the long journey back to Parliament in one collective piece might prove impossibly arduous.

**Ritu Sarin, Kuldeep Kumar and
Patralekha Chatterjee/New Delhi**



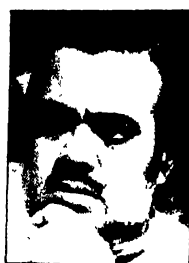
P UPENDRA

"It (the resignations from the Lok Sabha) was the quickest and smoothest operation that the Opposition has ever seen"



JAIPAL REDDY

"The CAG report has come as a crushing finale to the Bofors controversy... a scandal that refuses to go away"



K P UNNIKRISHNAN

"Not all the MPs have financial backing and property back home like some of us. It has been a great sacrifice for some of them"

rightist BJP. For obvious reasons, they cannot even afford to appear chummy. CPI(M) Politburo chief E.M.S. Namboodiripad has always been extremely wary of the BJP and its rightist, pro-Hindu views. He has consistently opposed to have any kind of truck with the party and has, on a number of occasions, warned the National Front leadership that his party would not go along with the mainstream Opposition if the BJP was roped in too. Namboodiripad acquiesced to the resignation move more for tactical reasons. But even while giving in to pressure from West Bengal chief minister Jyoti Basu, he made it clear that the decision to go along with the National Front and the BJP in the united resignation move does not mean that the CPI(M) accepts the

tious Ram Janambhoomi issue and demand the scrapping of the Minorities Commission. Sections of the Janata Dal and the Telugu Desam, however, feel that once the BJP becomes part of the mainstream Opposition, it will not be as intransigent on these issues as it is now. CPI leader Indrajit Gupta, on the other hand, is not as optimistic: "There will be nobody happier than us if the BJP gives up its insistence on these issues. But one has to be realistic. Just because they have resigned with us, they cannot be expected to change overnight."

More serious is the way Syed Shahabuddin has been kept away from the unity move. "The Janata Dal is my first love. But what can I do if my beloved is having a dalliance with a villain (BJP)?" asked a visibly upset Shahabuddin last

Citizen Wadia

Is the textile baron Indian, British or both?

Nusli Neville Wadia, the 45-year-old textile baron and friend-turned-enemy of the Rajiv regime, is fighting a legal battle with the Centre, the outcome of which may change, if not his own state of affairs, the very definition of citizenship of India. Wadia, chairman of Bombay Dyeing and Manufacturing Company, is a British passport-holder who, since enforcement of new rules after Operation Bluestar in 1984, required a visa to stay in India. The visa has expired and the Centre is not willing to let Wadia stay in India. Wadia has moved the Bombay High Court on the startling plea that he is a British citizen as well as a citizen of India, and, therefore, the Centre should be restrained from taking action against him as an undesirable foreigner.

The Parsi businessman was served with an order to leave India within 24 hours in the early hours of 11 July, when he flew into Bombay's Sahar International Airport from Europe. The visa issued to him in 1988 expired the same day. Wadia knew that he may have trouble staying in India ever since he fell from the Prime Minister's grace in 1987, when his arch-enemy, the Ambanis, regained Rajiv's favour. He had been

preparing for a protracted battle. Last year, Crawford Bailey, the well-known legal firm, moved a petition on behalf of Wadia which forcefully argued that dual citizenship did in no way contradict the concept of Indian citizenship as defined in the Constitution.

Article 5 of the Constitution of India, which defines citizenship "at the commencement of the Constitution" (on 26 January, 1950), says that, to be a citizen of India for a person who has his domicile in the territory of India, he or she:

- must be born in the territory of India; or
- either of his/her parents must be born in India; or
- he/she must be "ordinarily resident" in India for not less than five years

preceding 26 January, 1950.

Wadia argues in his petition that, being born in Bombay in 1944, more than five years before the commencement of the Constitution, and having lived in India right through, he is fully entitled to Indian citizenship. The petition says that he could be treated as a foreigner (non-citizen) only if he had renounced his Indian citizenship under Section 8 of the Citizenship Act of 1955. The renunciation procedure, framed under the Citizenship Act, calls for a proforma declaration, and its formal registration by the Union home ministry. But Wadia never renounced his Indian citizenship under Section 8 of the Citizenship Act, and, so he argues, he is as much an Indian as any other Indian citizen.

However, Wadia is a British citizen too. His father, Neville Ness Wadia, who lives in Switzerland now, was born in England and was thus a British citizen. By virtue of the provisions of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914, Nusli Wadia could "inherit" his father's British nationality. He argues that he is thus a "citizen of the UK by operation of law" but is also a citizen of India "by virtue of Article 5 of the Constitution".

The Union government is tight-lipped about the Wadia affair, but a source in the home ministry mentioned that, in the

Nusli Wadia: a question of citizenship



Centre's perception, Wadia's case fell under Section 9 of the Citizenship Act. It says that any Indian citizen who, "by naturalisation, registration or otherwise", voluntarily acquires the citizenship of another country, shall cease to be a citizen of India. But Wadia has argued that the British citizenship was passed on to him by birth; so, it is hardly a voluntary acquisition.

The government is also citing the colour of Wadia's passport as proof of his citizenship. In his petition, Wadia has said that he surrendered his Indian passport at his father's instance, and

took a British passport on 23 April, 1964. But a passport may be a mere travel document unrelated to citizenship, and, if the court also thinks along this line, the government has to come up with more solid arguments questioning Wadia's nationality (nationalities?).

A prominent member of Bombay's Parsi aristocracy, and a former chum of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Wadia earlier wielded considerable clout with the government. This began to reduce when his links with US investigator Michael Hershman (whom V.P. Singh, the erstwhile finance minister, had engaged to snoop on the foreign assets of Indian VIPs) came to light. In August 1987, only a few months after Singh's exit from the Union Cabinet, Wadia was arrested by the CBI on the ground that he had "wrongly described himself" as an Indian national while checking into a Delhi hotel. His passport was seized and returned only following an order from the Supreme Court.

The Centre obviously is hell-bent on teaching Wadia a lesson. Apart from Bombay Dyeing, Wadia is chairman of five other companies, vice-chairman of three and director of nine, including the gigantic Tata Iron and Steel Company. However, pressure is being mounted on many of these companies under FERA. Altogether, 15 such notices were served by the enforcement directorate in a matter of just four days in December



Wadia knew that he might have trouble staying in India when his links with Fairfax chief Michael Hershman (left) were exposed and his rival, Dhirubhai Ambani (right), rose in the government's esteem



Wadia (left) with father Neville and wife Maureen: summary rejection?

MUKESH PARIANI

Wadia argues that he is a citizen of the UK by operation of law but is also a citizen of India by virtue of the Constitution

1987. Then, the government slapped a heavy duty on paraxylene, the basic raw material for Bombay Dyeing's prime product, DMT, despite a global crash in paraxylene price. Result: Wadia was forced to push up the price of DMT and thus lose the race against the Ambanis, who make their own paraxylene.

A lot now depends on whether the courts accept Wadia's contention that he is as much a Britisher as an Indian. If his claim to Indian citizenship falls apart, there is little chance of Rajiv Gandhi's government giving him a visa or resident permit even though his wife, Sonia, lived in India for over a decade before renouncing her Italian nationality.

Sumit Mitra/New Delhi

Motilal Vora Inc.



*Bus transport companies
owned by the Madhya
Pradesh chief
minister's family get
rich by flouting
the law*

Motilal Vora: protecting his family's
business interests?

Running a private bus network on the dusty, uneven roads of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, must be one of the toughest lines of business going: to succeed here, one must fight the devious ways of corrupt officials, wily rivals and a ruthless titan—a club of transporters called the Chhattisgarh Yatayat Sangh (CYS)—backed and controlled by two of Madhya Pradesh's most influential political families, the Shuklas and the Voras. And the chances are, you won't beat them at their game.

It is a story of wheels within wheels. Of an oppressive suburban business monopoly that has managed to shut out honest competition, circumvent the law, coax and bully unobliging officials, grab permits and perpetuate an invisible system of obligation and favour that exists nowhere else in Madhya Pradesh. The



Durg Roadways' buses: favoured treatment

monopoly operates in Chhattisgarh, the seat of political power in Madhya Pradesh. It is the home of chief minister Motilal Vora, whose family has been in the bus business for four decades and owns shares in the three companies that call the shots.

These are Durg Roadways Pvt. Ltd, Durg Transport Pvt. Ltd and Durg Travels Pvt. Ltd, two of which the CM once worked for, partly owned and managed before transferring his shares to his sons. His younger son, Arun Kumar Vora, has 100 shares in Durg Travels and six in Durg Transport, and his elder son, a government servant, has 41 in Durg Roadways. All three companies have a large number of common shareholders. Between them, they account for most of the 400 or so private buses which carry passengers along the 13,000-odd km of paved roads and dirt tracks which connect the towns and

villages of the three districts that make up Chhattisgarh—Raipur, Durg and Rajnandgaon.

Nobody dares to challenge their hegemony. For no less a person than the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh protects them.

- Soon after Motilal Vora took over as the chief minister in 1985, he struck down a move by the then transport commissioner, A.N. Singh, to levy additional tax on bus operators. The idea was to make the taxes on bus owners commensurate with the increase in fares (118 per cent between 1978 and 1985) and not allow them to increase fares further. But Vora told the Cabinet that the taxes would result in higher fares. This was a falsehood.

Rejection of the proposal meant a loss in additional revenue of Rs 46,89,08,337 for the state and a net saving of Rs 36,41,472 for two of Vora's companies. The other members of the Sangh, Rajnandgaon Roadways, Raipur Transport and Shukla's MP Transport enjoyed a net saving of Rs 59,32,396.

- Seven regular stage carriage permits (licences to operate a passenger bus service in stages on a given route) were issued to Durg Roadways and Durg Travels against *suo moto* applications in

1987. This violated a mandatory provision which reserved 15 and 18 per cent of route mileage for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe operators respectively. The procedure for keeping these quotas pending for one year under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1939, was also ignored. The Vora companies earned Rs 28 lakhs a year in additional revenue by way of this. A writ petition

filed against the issue of these permits has been waiting for a hearing in the High Court for the last two years.

- In order to escape the ceiling of ten permits per company laid down by the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, two days before the Act came into force (in July 1989), Durg Roadways managed to set up new companies with some of the shareholders' relatives as partners and transferred its excess permits to them. In this way, Durg Roadways, which had over 40 permits, managed to retain them and defeat the new Act, which

prohibits the issue of fresh permits to companies already operating ten or more.

- Durg Roadways and Durg Transport operated without permits on the Bemetara-Khairagarh and Bemetara-Mahamaya routes respectively in 1984 and 1985, escaping penal taxes amounting to Rs 9,09,000 and Rs 4,80,000.

- Durg Roadways managed to evade taxes to the tune of Rs 1,32,000 by claiming that its buses were plying on long stretches of dirt roads on the Durg-Bemetara, Durg-Dhamtari, Raipur-Atariya, Raipur-Uktanar, Bemetara-Mungeli and the Dhamda-Khairagarh routes even though all of them were paved.

Take the first charge, the decision to strike down additional taxes. The fares for regular stage carriages were raised by 30 per cent by a state government notification with effect from 6 June, 1978. These fares were increased by about 26 per cent over the 1980 fares on 26 July, 1983, and again by 31 per cent over the 1983 fares on 1 July, 1985. The minimum fare increased from 45 paise in 1978 to one rupee in 1985.

This resulted in additional revenue for the bus operators, but was

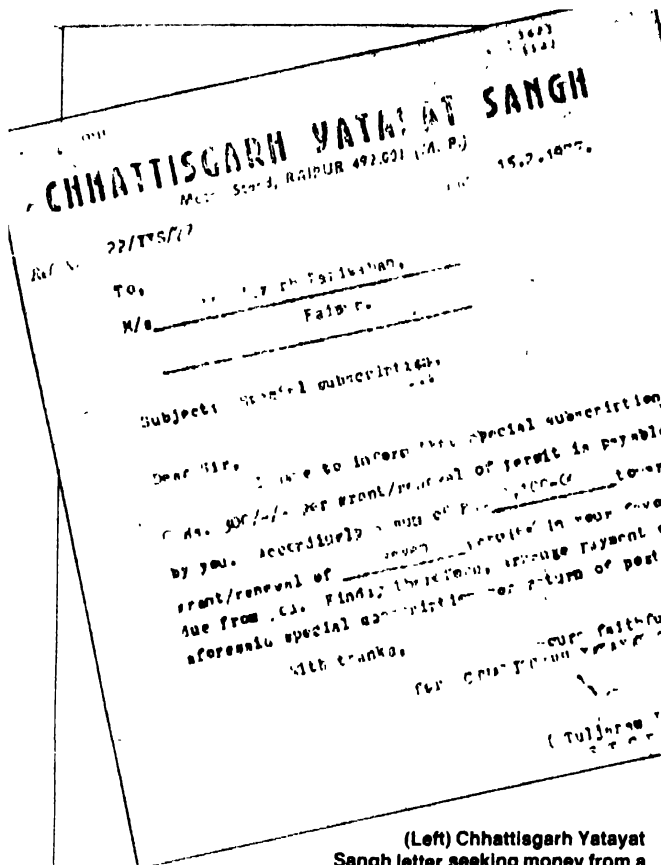
not matched by an increase in taxes, which remained unchanged.

Additional taxes on operators are levied in accordance with the MP Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1974. For stage carriages, the rate was 12 paise per seat per ten km of paved roads covered every month and ten paise per seat for every ten km of dirt roads covered each month from 16 October to 15 June. The

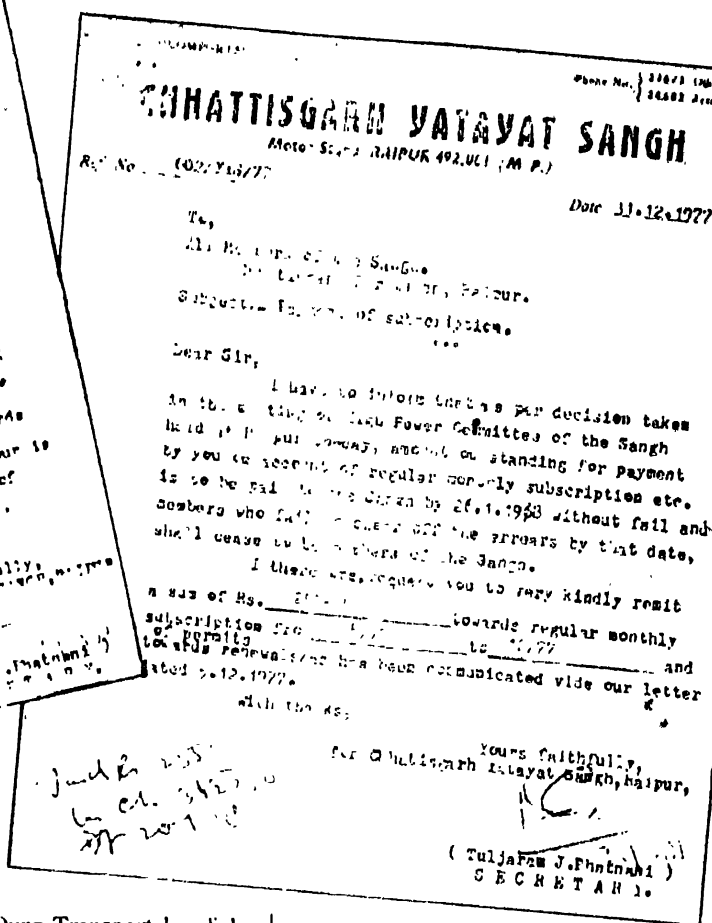
rates were different for the rest of the year (16 June to 15 October): nine paise per seat per ten km on paved roads and eight paise per seat per ten km on dirt roads. These rates remained constant from 1978 to 1985.

The then transport commissioner, A.N. Singh, proposed an increase of six paise (from 12 paise to 18 paise) in the paved road rate. Since the tax was on bus operators who could not hike passenger fares on their own, the public would not have been affected. The transport lobby, of course, campaigned against this recommendation. At that

It is a story of wheels within wheels. Of an oppressive monopoly that has managed to circumvent the law, grab permits and perpetuate a system of obligation and favour



(Left) Chhattisgarh Yatayat Sangh letter seeking money from member for arranging the grant/renewal of permits: an illegal request; a Sangh letter demanding subscriptions: powerful body



time, Motilal Vora became the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh after Arjun Singh was appointed Governor of Punjab. One of his first steps was to appoint Ram Rattan the transport commissioner. On 29 June, 1985, Rattan put forward a fresh proposal which suggested that Singh's recommendation "be treated as withdrawn". Singh's plan received another blow when the then deputy secretary to the government, Gupta, suggested in a note that increasing the additional tax would affect the public. When the matter came up before Vora, he rejected the proposal on these grounds, even though he knew they were totally incorrect.

No guesses as to why Vora struck down A. N. Singh's proposal. Before he was first elected an MLA, Vora was an employee of Rajab Ali Farishta and worked as a senior officer at Rajnandgaon Roadways. He went on to become the managing director of Durg Roadways and the director of Durg Transport, in both of which he owned shares. Vora's sons still hold shares in these two companies. Durg Roadways' shareholders subsequently floated Durg Travels, of which Arun Vora (the chief minister's son) is a director. Over the years, the Voras' transport empire has grown. If you consider the companies which have common shareholders, the network is

even larger—Durg Transport has links with MP Transport, which in turn has common shareholders with Durg Roadways, Raipur Transport and Rajnandgaon Roadways. Together, they own over 200 vehicles, almost half the total number of private buses that ply in the region.

Charge two relates to the granting of seven permits to Durg Roadways and Durg Travels in 1987. Bus operators applied to the Regional Transport Authority (RTA), Raipur, for regular stage carriage permits for various routes. The applications were published in the state gazette, according to the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1939, on 2 January, 1987, inviting objections, if any, within 30 days.

One of the objections related to the violation of the provision for reserving a fixed percentage of the total mileage of the routes for Scheduled Castes (15 per cent) and Scheduled Tribes (18 per cent). Earlier, the RTA had rejected all *suo moto* applications for permits on 23 November, 1983, for this very reason and its order was upheld by the Madhya Pradesh High Court (petition number 643 decided on 17 September, 1987). The law requires the RTA to prepare a roster and fix a quota for SC/STs before

considering applications for fresh permits.

But in this case, there were other compulsions. Secretary to the RTA, A.N. Tiwari (a Vora loyalist from the CM's secretariat) and the RTA, Raipur, Shekhar Dutt (who is now secretary to the Governor) did not abide by the rules. The RTA chose to ignore precedent to do the CM's sons a good turn. There were a total of 21 applicants, of whom



only eight were granted permits. Two of these went to Durg Travels and five to Durg Roadways, both Vora companies. Hearings on all other cases were put off—on the plea that there were too many objections against them.

The permits meant a rich harvest. Permission to ply on the five routes—Saja-Bortara, Raipur-Khamaria, Bargaoon-Durg, Durg-Bhimori and Durg-Bemetara—meant an extra Rs 13,68,000 a year for Durg Roadways; and the two permits that Durg Travels cornered—Durg-Bemetara and Durg-Khamaria with two return trips on each route—earned an additional Rs 13,40,000 a year for the company.

The third allegation relates to the manner in which two of the three companies Vora's sons have shares in, along with other powerful members of the Chhattisgarh Yatayat Sangh, managed to circumvent the permit ceiling of the new Motor Vehicles Act. The new Act, which came into force from 1 July, 1989, imposes a ceiling of ten permits for a company and five permits for an individual bus operator. Before the new Act came into force, Durg Roadways had over 40 permits, Durg Transport over 25, MP Transport 47 and Raipur Transport 40. Although they were free to operate these permits as long as they were valid, the new Act made their renewal impossible.

But where there is a will there is a way. As Mukesh Vyas, secretary of the Yatayat Sangh, admits with a confident smile, "It isn't too difficult to get permits if you want to. All you have to do is take them in your uncle, aunt or nephew's names." Which is precisely what the Sangh members did. They floated new companies in the names of their friends

Nobody dares challenge the hegemony of the bus transport companies in Chhattisgarh that Motilal Vora's sons own. For they are protected by the chief minister himself

and relatives and transferred their excess permits to them—an exercise which is admittedly permissible under the law. All they needed was the permission of the RTA. In some cases they transferred their permits to 'companies' and individuals who didn't even have any buses.

Durg Roadways transferred a total of 28 permits to seven new companies and its sister concern Durg Travels; Rajnandgaon Roadways transferred 20 permits to six new companies; and Raipur Transport transferred 14 permits to four names. Effectively, this meant that they retained their excess permits while, at the same time, secured fresh permits against their own names. All this happened when B.L. Dhruw was the additional RTO, Durg, and, by a Vora government order, was functioning as the

secretary, RTA, Raipur. He was brought in to temporarily replace the RTO, Raipur, Aziz Quereshi, a man who proved too hard a nut to crack. However, under the Motor Vehicles Act, the RTO, Raipur, is meant to function as the secretary, RTA.

The fourth charge relates to the operation of buses without permits by the Vora companies, Durg Roadways and Durg Transport, on two routes. Durg Roadways operated its buses regularly on the Bemetara-Khairagarh route from 1 January, 1985, to 10 June, 1985, and Durg Transport's buses plied without permit on the Bemetara-Mahamaya route from 13 November, 1984 to 31 January, 1985. Illegal operation invites a severe penalty under the MP Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1974: a bus operator plying without permit is liable to pay Rs 100 per seat per day at full seating capacity plus a fee of Rs 1,000. This means Durg Roadways is liable to pay a penalty of Rs 4,20,000 and Durg Transport Rs 4,89,000.

But they got away without paying a paisa. Despite repeated protests by another bus owner operating in the same area, the RTA and RTO, Raipur (who is the tax officer), the transport commissioner of the state, the accountant general and the chief minister himself turned a deaf ear.

The fact that one of Vora's companies, Durg Roadways, misstated its *pucca* and *kutchra* road mileage on six routes to evade taxes is further proof of its brazenness. The matter came to light only after an audit of the transport office records. Since the tax on buses plying on dirt roads is much lower than those using paved roads, Durg Roadways claimed to be plying its vehicles on a greater length of dirt roads than it actually did. For this deception, the company was liable to pay a fine of Rs 1,32,000.

Durg Roadways, Durg Transport and Durg Travels, along with Shyama Charan Shukla's MP Transport Company Pvt. Ltd, Rajnandgaon Roadways and Raipur Transport Company control the Chhattisgarh Yatayat Sangh. The Sangh has 13 members, which together command a fleet of 300 buses. It coaxes all transport operators in the region to enrol as members so that it can arrogate the right to speak for all of them and bully whoever it wishes to. But not everyone submits. Jagmir Singh Garcha of Chhattisgarh Parivahan broke away, angry at being discriminated against. But that only made things worse for him.

Boasts Mukesh Vyas of Raipur Transport and secretary of the Sangh, "He

(From left) Satwant Singh Gill: challenging the grant of permits to Vora companies; Gurdeep Singh Garcha: defending the Sangh; Jagmir Singh Garcha: quit the Sangh at his own cost



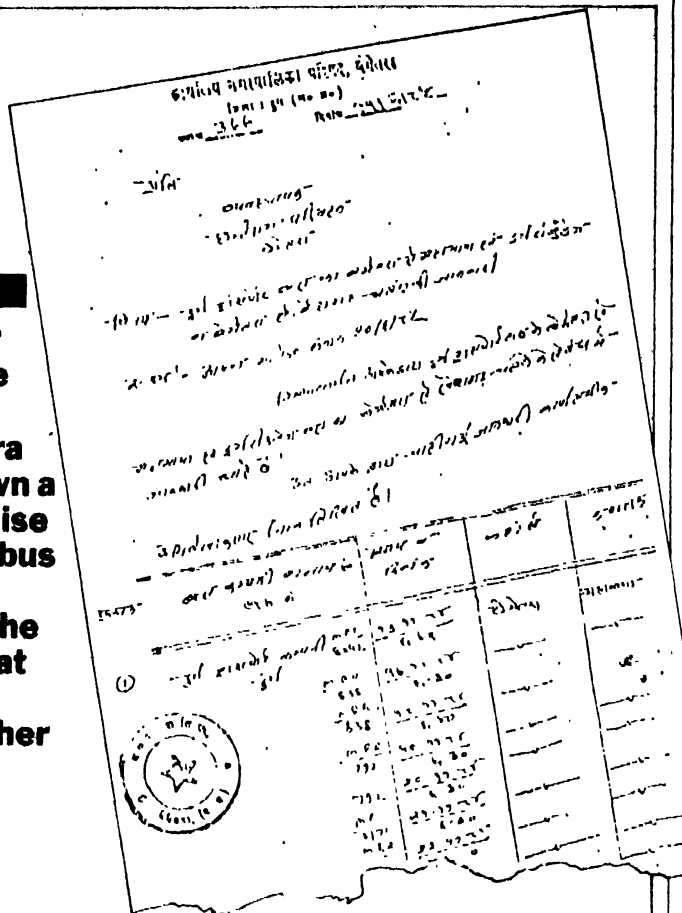
(Garcha) is the only one who isn't doing well today because all he does is fight with us." There are others whom the Sangh has driven to the wall. Garcha's nephew Satwant Singh Gill, 28, filed a writ petition in the Madhya Pradesh High Court challenging the grant of seven permits (for which he was an applicant too) to the Voras' companies. His writ names the RTA, Raipur, Durg Roadways and Motilal Vora, who was then Union health minister, as respondents. One of his arguments is that it is wrong to say there were no objections to the granting of permits to Durg Roadways—the objections were caused to be withdrawn.

Yet another person disenchanted with the Sangh is A.K. Shukla of the Durg District Mazdoor Kamgar Cooperative Society, which owns 11 buses. Shukla was, until recently, a member of the Sangh. But when the Sangh refused to "do anything" about his application for four permits, which had been gathering dust for two years, he quit. "It doesn't help to be a nobody," he says sadly.

Till 1945, individual transporters ran the show in Chhattisgarh. Subsequently, 18 of them joined to form the Raipur Transport Company. In 1953-54, when Ravi Shankar Shukla was the chief minister of the then Central Provinces and Berar, he offered private transport companies the same facilities which were extended to the state transport corporation if they united to form "viable units" or units that could run more efficiently. This resulted in the creation of the Combined Transport Company, Sarguja-Raigarh Roadways, Raipur Transport, the Shukla family-controlled MP Transport Company (into which the CM's own company J. Shukla and Company merged), Highway Pvt. Ltd and Anand Transport Company. Among other bus operators were the Sindhi refugees.

These companies were based in Durg, Bilaspur and Raipur. Some of them broke up. Combined Transport split into two and Highway Pvt. Ltd into three separate companies—Durg Roadways, Durg Transport and Rajnandgaon Roadways. Motilal Vora, who used to work in Raipur as an accounts clerk for Rajab Ali Farishta, was assigned to work in Rajnandgaon Roadways. Very impressed with him, Farishta gifted him some shares in Durg Roadways and Durg Transport. Vora eventually became a shareholder-director of both companies. When he joined active politics, he transferred his shares to his sons—41 in Durg Transport to Arvind Vora and 33 in Durg Roadways to Arun

Soon after he became CM in 1985, Vora struck down a move to raise the tax on bus operators. Vora told the Cabinet that this would lead to higher fares—a falsehood



Bemetara Municipality document which shows the dates on which Durg Transport and Durg Roadways piled buses without permits: flouting the law

Motilal Vora: transport operator?



Vora. Both sons continue to be shareholder-directors of the two companies.

Durg Roadways' growth has been phenomenal. When its turnover increased to a point when it almost qualified to become a public limited company, it floated Durg Travels, which had common shareholders with Durg Roadways. Arun Kumar Vora was given 100 shares in it. The Shuklas, who were shareholder-directors of MP Transport, similarly transferred their shares to their wives and close relatives after stepping into active politics. Both families have produced chief ministers and both take a keen interest in the transport business.

The Chhattisgarh Yatayat Sangh came into being when some of the 'viable units' formed an association to "promote their interests". It was the brainchild of the former state chief minister, Shyama Charan Shukla. The Sangh today operates almost as a parallel authority, controlling the issuance and renewal of permits. "There's nothing illegal about our association," explains Gurdeep Singh

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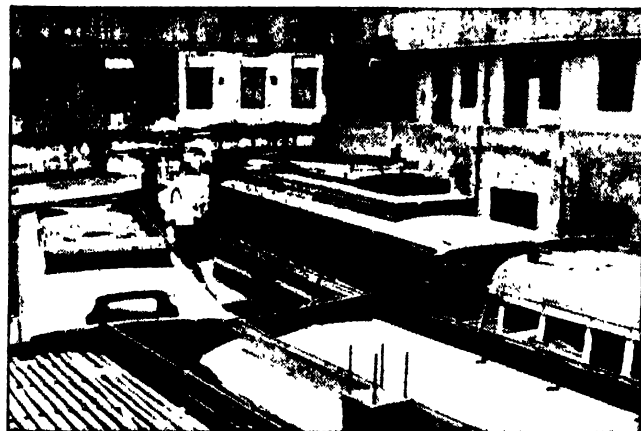
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(Clockwise from left)
Vyas' Raipur
Transport bus fleet:
links with Vora
companies; A.N.
Tiwari and B.L.
Dhruw: pro-Vora
officials?



Garcha, managing director of Raipur Transport. "It is necessary to avoid unhealthy competition." Asked why small operators like A.K. Shukla did not want to stay on in the Sangh, Mukesh Vyas replied, "Everyone cannot be satisfied."

What about the charge of transferring permits to relatives two days before the new Motor Vehicles Act came into force? "What else could we do?" asks Satyendra Tiwari of Durg Roadways. "We had 40 permits. We had to do something. But the point is, it was all done legally. We paid Rs 400 for each permit to the RTA." Tiwari denies emphatically that the Sangh enjoys a monopoly. "Fresh permits were given to non-members of the Sangh, like Anand Roadways. And under the new Act, a monopoly is ruled out. You can't keep more than ten permits." Mukesh Vyas agrees with Tiwari and points out that several of the Sangh companies have been refused temporary permits. "Even though Raipur Transport and Durg Roadways both had experience operating the route, they were refused a Balaghat-Durg regular permit which they together applied for a year and a half ago, and they were also denied Mandla-Durg, Mandla-Raipur, Jabalpur-Niwās (three return trips) and Niwas-

Mandla (three return trips) permits in the last six months—after Motilal Vora became the chief minister." Yet, he says, others "less qualified" were issued permits—Om Prakash Jaiswal's Puneet Travels, Mahakushal Tourist and Sharda Travels, a company which had never operated on any route.

Satyendra Tiwari claims temporary permits for several routes were given indiscriminately to Chhattisgarh Pariwahan, which is not a Sangh member and the RTO in question, Aziz Quereshi,

**Durg Roadways and
Durg Transport
escaped the provision
that laid down a
maximum of ten
permits per company
by setting up new
companies and
transferring excess
permits to them**

was placed under suspension on a corruption charge. However, Quereshi—appointed the RTO during the chief ministership of Arjun Singh—was reinstated after he appealed to the state administrative tribunal, which ordered that "he shall not be relieved". The authorities defied the tribunal's verdict twice by transferring him out of Raipur, but, in both cases, the tribunal struck down the executive order. Quereshi's lawyer explains, "He is just being punished for giving the Sangh a hard time." Tiwari, on the other hand, complains, "He didn't even allow us to see the records."

As for the seven permits issued to the two Vora companies, Vyas and Gurdeep Singh are surprised at why anyone should oppose the granting of permits on *suo moto* applications—unsolicited applications which operators file on their own initiative after surveying the countryside for months and prospecting for fresh routes. "You have to credit the applicant for finding the route, why should the permit go to someone else?" Vyas asks. The Sangh spokesmen also say that the question of reserving mileage for SC/STs does not arise because the RTA never declared a "scope" (division of mileage into a general category and one for SC/STs). Besides, they argue, what is the point in reserving mileage for SC/STs when there are hardly any such applicants?

Ranbir Singh, the commissioner and RTA, Raipur, cites the Motor Vehicles Act itself to justify that permits were issued to better-off companies. He says that the Act lays down that the conditions for granting permits include the financial position of a company and possession of infrastructural facilities such as garages.

Did the Sangh force people to withdraw objections against the granting of permits to its VIP members? Ranbir Singh does not seem too worried about the answer. He says, "This is a common problem of dispensing justice, because all we can go by is the record. It isn't my job to go out and investigate. I don't have the time."

Maybe. But whose responsibility is it to ensure that officials do not take advantage of loopholes in the law to oblige companies in which a chief minister's sons own shares? And whose duty is it to check that a few companies do not establish a stranglehold over a region's transport system? And why should the fact that Motilal Vora is chief minister of Madhya Pradesh be relevant to the fortunes of his sons' companies?

Nirmal Mitra/Raipur, Durg and Jabalpur

Closing ranks



The CAG report acts as a catalyst for Opposition unity

KULDIP NAYAR

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the Bofors gun deal is like the Allahabad High Court judgement against Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1975. In fact, Rajiv Gandhi's indictment is more serious because the CAG has corroborated the Opposition's allegation that middlemen were involved in the deal and that commission was received for buying an inferior gun. But, in comparison, Mrs Gandhi's was a minor poll offence.

Mrs Gandhi committed the mistake of not resigning from the prime ministership because, had she done so, she would have come back with a greater majority. Instead, she imposed the Emergency and lost heavily, not being able to retain even her own seat. Rajiv Gandhi has made the same mistake of not resigning.

In fact, he delayed the tabling of the report on the floor of the House when it was received during the budget session of Parliament. Had he resigned and owned moral responsibility for what had gone wrong with the Bofors gun deal, he might have retrieved his position. He would have stood a better chance at the polls because Indians are generally willing to forgive a person who tenders an apology.

NOW HE has suffered both ways. He had the initiative, but has allowed it to go to the Opposition, which has played its cards well. The issue of corruption, which had receded into the background, has come to the fore. The 1977 election was fought on the slogan of dictatorship versus democracy; now the theme will be corruption versus morality.

The issue comes as a godsend to the Opposition because there was nothing else on which it could have united. Chandra Shekhar in the Janata Dal and E.M.S.

Nambudiripad in the CPI(M) had been having their own ideas and would have been willing to let Rajiv Gandhi continue if their way of thinking had been accepted. But when the National Front leaders and others met in Delhi to decide that Opposition MPs should resign *en masse* from Parliament, there was not a single voice of dissent. In fact, some leaders wondered subsequently how it all happened, how such a consensus came about and how the parties on the right and the left showed solidarity without anyone having spoken to them.

If nothing else, it should prove to Rajiv Gandhi that his daily abuse of the Opposition can only help to string them together. They have sunk their differences because they see in him a great danger to the nation. Had he not broken all contacts with them through his arrogance and conceit, some of them might have tended to give him the benefit of the doubt and considered twice before resigning. The alacrity with which they united shows that they see as their first task the removal of a corrupt government.

Rajiv Gandhi cannot postpone the elections in the hope that with the passage of time the impact of the CAG report will lessen, nor can he impose an Emergency. Either measure, even if effected through legal jugglery, will not fetch the two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha which is a constitutional obligation. And he cannot afford to go to the polls asking the electorate to judge him on the Bofors gun deal, an issue thrust on him by the Opposition, because he may then lose.

The Opposition can let him off the hook if it once again begins to air its differences and wash its dirty linen in public. But this is unlikely. The mood of the public is such that should anyone in the Opposition resort to such gimmicks, he will be marginalised and considered a destroyer of the alternative which has emerged overnight.

THE CONGRESS(I) has a point when it argues that the Opposition MPs have resigned only because the polls are round the corner. But politics is a game which, if played correctly, yields results. Countries all over the world have appreciated the Opposition's courage and the way democracy has entrenched itself in India. The Pakistanis are wonder-struck because the people there have a low opinion of politicians who, to them, are only hungry for power and all that goes with it. The resignation of the 100-odd Indian MPs should serve as a shining example of principle and sacrifice for their MPs.

I do not know how things will develop in the next four or five months till the elections are held.

It is difficult to say whether the Opposition will be able to sustain the tempo which they have built in the last few days.

There is a rumour that AB Bofors, the manufacturers of the guns, may deduct Rs 64 crores given as kickbacks from what India has to pay. A team from the Swedish firm was in New Delhi recently to negotiate the manufacture of the gun. The contract for the purchase of the gun had a clause whereby India could collaborate with Bofors to produce the gun in India itself. The second project is worth hundreds of crores of rupees and so Bofors can well afford to sacrifice Rs 64 crores. ■

Rajiv Gandhi had the initiative, but has allowed it to go to the Opposition, which has played its cards well.

The issue of corruption, which had receded into the background, has come to the fore

Tales from Capitol Hill

● Ram Jethmalani makes news wherever he goes.

And a fortnight ago, the Opposition Inspector Clouseau was stationed in Washington. Fair enough. As friends of the Opposition never tire of reminding us, political leaders *do* have the right to make foreign trips.

In the American capital to sell V.P. Singh as alternative Prime Minister to members of the Congress, and subsequently to the American people (bully for the foreign hand!), Jethmalani refused to divulge the names of those he met. For fear that the Indian embassy "with its strong lobby powers would seek to undo my efforts".



Ram Jethmalani: selling the Raja

Congressional sources were less coy. The Janata Dal leader, apparently, made contact with several celebrated India baiters, prominent among them Republican Wally Herger, best known for his suggested amendment (shot down, finally) that the US stop all aid to India, until the President certified that the policemen charged of atrocities against Sikh women had been punished.

Yes, Mr Jethmalani, the truth *does* expose us all.

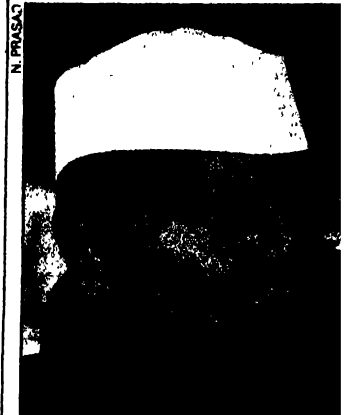
A poet's paranoia

● Poetry may be good for the soul, but it hasn't done much for Priya Ranjan Das Munshi's intelligence. Other than make him wildly inventive, that is.

For, who do you think the union commerce minister holds responsible for the entire Bofors imbroglio? None other than the keeper of Polythene Pam (Pamella Bordes), Adnan Khashoggi.

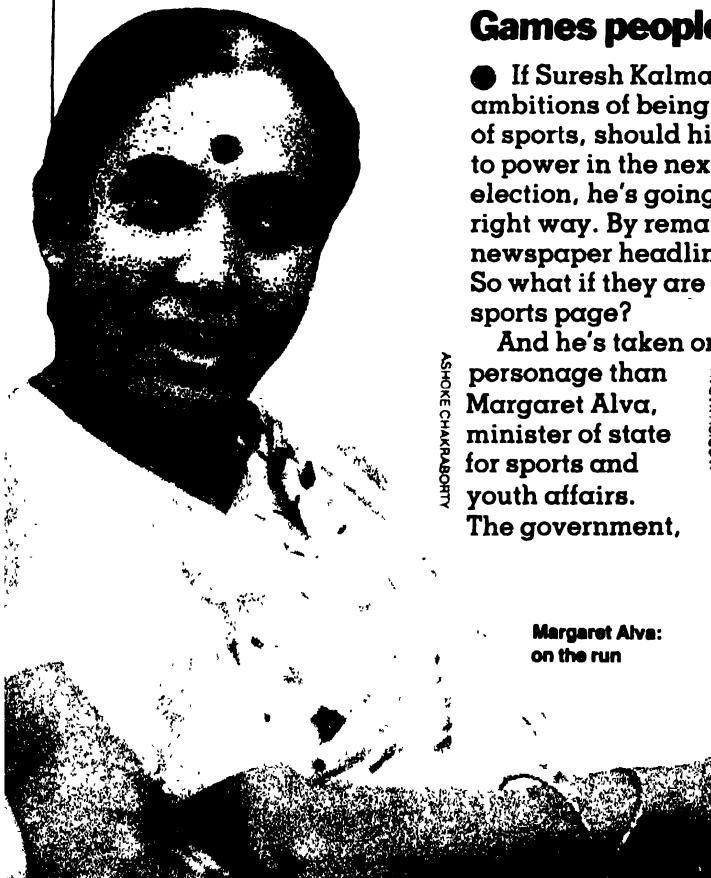
Okay, Khashoggi is the most celebrated arms dealer going. And there's no getting around the fact that, in desperate straits, he would play dirty. But Bofors? Surely Priya's got this one a trifle wrong.

No, says Das Munshi. There's more to this than meets the eye. The Congress' most celebrated



Priya Ranjan Das Munshi: inventive story

versifier believes that Khashoggi has put the Opposition upto that old resignation routine. Piqued at having failed at bagging the Bofors contract, the arms dealer chose this novel method to take revenge. And the Opposition, which will take the help of even an "escaped convict" if such a need arises fell in with his



Margaret Alva: on the run

Games people play

● If Suresh Kalmadi harbours ambitions of being the minister of sports, should his party come to power in the next general election, he's going about it the right way. By remaining in newspaper headlines, that is. So what if they are only on the sports page?

And he's taken on no less a personage than Margaret Alva, minister of state for sports and youth affairs. The government,

says Kalmadi, on Blessed Margaret's injunctions, is promoting the Sports Authority of India (SAI) at the expense of bodies such as the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the Amateur Athletic Federation of India (AAFI), of which Kalmadi is president.

As part of the on-going vendetta, charges Kalmadi, the sports ministry is being un-

cooperative about the arrangements for the 8th Asian Track and Field Meet, organised by the AAFI, to be held this November.

Alva, of course, denies all these charges as figments of Kalmadi's overworked imagination. But there's no denying that he has her on the run.

Suresh Kalmadi: the right way





Adnan Khushniggi: the foreign hand
evil designs.

Not that Adnan, currently charged with financial fraud, and with having helped the Marcos' embezzle funds, is likely to be perturbed by these allegations. But Priya's proved his loyalty to his master.

In the Congress(I) scheme of things, that's all that matters.

What a fall there was!

● Regional films have always been considered the last resort of the out of work actor/actress. And when Poonam Dhillon, in the first flush of marital bliss, announced that she'd do only choice films now, nobody thought she meant Tollygunge productions.

Poonam is now shooting for her first Bengali film, Sukhen Das's *Nyaydand*, a standard *masala* movie, in which the sexy Sikhni plays a come-hither seductress—a break from her stereotype image. Her performance, say insiders, is convincing, despite unfamiliarity with the language. But then, one presumes, parts such as these call for little other than looking pretty. And that Poonam does almost

effortlessly.

Why Bengali films? Says Poonam: "They can be finished in about three months and do not drag on for three or four years as Hindi films do." But surely, time is one thing that Ms Dhillon has in plenty these days.

Poonam Dhillon: now, regional cinema



ANIL GROVER

Not guilty

● So, he's off the hook.

Test star Navjot Singh Sidhu, whose cricket career seemed in doubt after he was charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, has been cleared by the police.

December last, Navjot and friend, Rupinder Singh, got into an altercation with some people travelling in a Maruti Gypsy. In a fit of fury, or so the story went, Sidhu dragged one of them, Gurnam Singh, out of the car,

and with Rupinder pitching in also, beat him up soundly. So much so, that the unfortunate man was declared dead on being taken to

hospital.

The investigations began, with the police swinging into action with their usual enthusiasm. Navjot, for his part,

zipped off to the West Indies, to do his bit for the Indian test cricket team.

While sport didn't give him anything to cheer about, there was good news awaiting him in India. The police found him innocent of any wrong-doing in the Gurnam Singh case.

Rupinder was less lucky. Investigations proved his complicity and a charge sheet was filed against him in the court of the additional chief judicial magistrate, Patiala.

But that, as they say, is another story.

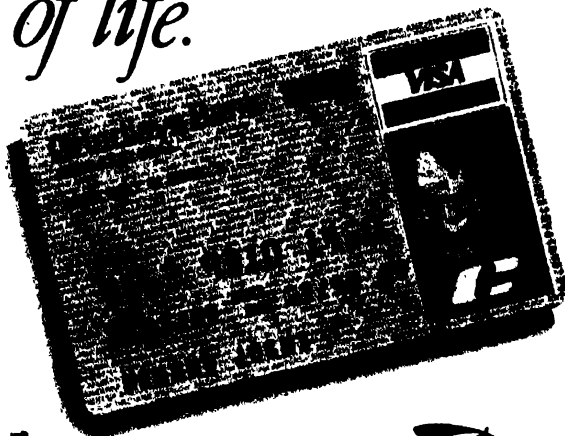
Navjot Singh Sidhu: good news, at last



NAVJOT SINGH



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celebrate
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of life.*



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Such a pleasure.*

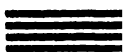
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What's with the Kapoors? Granted that the state of their careers is pathetic to say the least. Granted that it can't feel too good to see your status as the first family of filmdom threatened. But even that is no excuse to behave in an execrable manner as the Kapoor children have been doing of late.

The worst offender in this regard is the kid brother Chimpoo Kapoor. Apparently, he has gone to the extent of neglecting to pay up his dues to the exclusive Bombay club to which he belongs.

eyeing for some time now, was being offered to nubile nymphet Neelam. Appalled at the thought of being done out, Sonam swung into action. And how!

Before you could say Jack Robinson, Sonam had gone straight up to director Rajiv Rai, to tell him, in her usual no-frills manner, that she was quite willing to do the film free of cost, or at any fee he was able to pay. But the role must be hers, come what may. So, the next thing you knew was that Neelam was out and Sonam was in.

Yes, Neelam, that is the way the cookie crumbles.

If there were any doubts about how fine an actress Dimple Kapadia is, they have been set at rest. Especially by her performance in *Batwara*, in which the actress played Dharmendra's lover.

It made for a piquant situation you will agree. After all,

Sonam: no dumb blonde

she is the paramour of the Deol son, Sunny. But Dimple, being Dimple, didn't allow that to faze her. In fact her performance, especially in the sizzling love scenes, was so realistic that unit hands were heard to comment that the lady was probably indulging in some make belief—that it were Sunny's arms which were enclosing her lissom frame, not those of papa Dharam.

But surely that's underestimating Dharam's *garam* charm.

Salma Agha is back in Bombay—yet again. And as always, she's telling all who will listen that *this* time she's here for keeps. Not surprisingly, nobody's buying the story.

To convince all doubting Thomases that she was levelling this time round (did we hear you say "likely story") the lady has gone and

Dimple Kapadia: like father, like son

bought herself a house. A cute little bungalow, which she is now doing up in the proper "Italian" manner. There's a fountain, central air-conditioning and Agha is currently debating whether an Italian marble-tiled swimming pool would be a good idea.

Be that as it may, Salma is all set to make a sensational

Chimpoo Kapoor: non-payment of dues

The club authorities, not to be outdone, have put his name up on the notice board, proclaiming his offence in bold letters for all to see.

Insiders have it that Chimpoo is suitably chastened. But has he been shamed into paying up his dues?

Perhaps she isn't as dumb as she looks. Yes, we are talking of Sonam, the dumb blonde (only in a manner of speaking, you understand) of the film industry.

To the contrary, her *modus operandi* is enough to shame even Ms Professional Seshadri. Take the time she heard that the *Tridev* role, opposite Naseeruddin Shah, which she'd been greedily

Salma: on the comeback trail

comeback with Raj Kumar Kohli's *Rakhail*, in which she plays the title role. And the return to the arc lights seems to have done her good. She looks as slim, svelte and sexy as ever, with her broken marriage forgotten like the proverbial bad dream. 

The making of a legend

The rediscovery of the 19th century Kannada saint-poet Sishunala Sharif

On occasion, regional chauvinism has fortunate fall-outs. As, when it leads to the 'rediscovery' of a poet-saint. In this case: the 19th century figure, Sishunala Sharif, who after being forgotten for years altogether now finds fame and recognition in the year of his hundredth death anniversary.

Sharif, who now enjoys popularity as the Kabir of the south and whose mystic devotional songs are current chartbusters, was, only a few years ago, known only to some Kannada academicians as the first Mohammedan poet of Kannada literature. Of course, Sharif was a much worshipped figure in his native Dharwar region, with thousands of devotees, both Hindu and Muslim, congregating at his grave in Sishunala village every May, to offer prayers at the 'shrine'. Now, however, the poet has been transformed from being a purely local phenomenon to a living symbol of Kannadiga pride—embodying the spirituality of the state's cultural heritage, and the concept of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Strangely enough, what sparked off this metamorphosis was a boom in the state's music industry. Well-known Kannada litterateur Dr Lakshminarayana Bhatta was approached by music director C. Aswath for some new poems which the latter could set to music. Bhatta, who was closely acquainted with Sharif's work, suggested that he work on the saint's devotional songs. Aswath was initially hesitant, doubtful perhaps, as to whether the poems would appeal to modern audiences. But convinced by Bhatta's persuasiveness, finally agreed. Sharif's poems stood the test of time. And signalled a revolution in the folk music industry. In fact, Sharif's *Taraval-*

la tegi ninna tamburi swara (Take it off, your tamburi is off key), which was aired over a sponsored AIR programmes in 1980 proved a runaway hit, and was soon on the lips of every Kannadiga. Says Aswath: "It was unbelievable how



Scenes from the film *Sishunala Sharif Saheba*: tribute to a saintly figure

the people responded."

The listeners, hooked on the mystic lyrics and haunting tunes couldn't seem to get enough. Without a doubt, the phenomenon of Sishunala Sharif was here to stay.

Signalling this, came the ultimate tribute of our age—a feature film on the saint-poet, to commemorate his memory on his 100th death anniversary. As the director of the film, *Sishunala Sharif Saheba*, T.S. Nagabharana, winner of several state and national level awards says: "This is a tribute to a rare phenomenon."

The making of the movie wasn't easy, though. For one thing, there was no authentic account of Sharif's life available. The details had been lost in a





series of folk tales, each more improbable than the other. The figure of Sharif had been deified until all reality was utterly lost in myth and make belief. So, despite the best efforts of the crew, no coherent account of the poet's life emerged. Says Nagabharana: "We spent a month in the village, Sishunala, trying to track some account of his life which we could translate into the language of cinema. But all the stories we heard contradicted one another."

Nonetheless, the film crew managed to hunt up some facts about the saint-poet. Sharif was born in 1829 in Sishunala village of Dharwar district, to Hazuma and Imam Sahib, a liberal man who loved literature. Sharif grew up like any other ordinary boy his age. Until he met and joined up with a maverick Brahmin Govinda Bhatta, who revealed to him the secrets of Hindu religion and became his guru. United in their disregard for organised religion and ritual of any kind, the duo studied the Hindu epics, the state's *Vachana* and *Sharana* literature and were deeply influenced by the mystic saint Allama Prabhu. It is this mysticism that colours all of Sharif's poetry and imparts poignance to it. And it is this quality that ensures that the popularity of his songs survives to this very day. Their appeal is to the heart.

What adds to their charm is that they work at many levels and in several directions at the same time. Dr Bhatta maintains, with many others, that while Sharif's poems may appear mundane on a superficial reading, detailed analysis reveals unsuspected depths.

The mysticism of the songs made the task of Nagabharana and his team doubly difficult. Especially since in the absence of a proper plot, the director had decided to build the film around Sharif's poems. Says the director: "We set out to recreate the story of the poet from the songs themselves. The songs must have been the result of his entire life experience and we traced a story line accordingly."



This was perhaps the first occasion in motion picture history that an entire film was constructed around a series of songs. Says Aswath: "This is a first. Songs are always recorded for a movie and not the other way round." Nagabharana, then, was assigned the singular—and unenviable—task of working his way backwards. He did not prove unequal to the demands placed on him.

Finances were not a problem. (The crew had the support of liquor baron Hari Khoday and Mahima Patel, the son of the former Janata Dal minister J.H. Patel.) Casting the parts was. The faces of Sharif and Bhatta were confused in folk memory. But from some paintings and a study of the physiognomy of the local population, their features were decided upon. Kannada actor Sridhar got to play Sharif while Girish Karnad was given the role of the eccentric Brahmin guru Govinda Bhatta.

In the film Sharif comes through as a great saint of southern Sufism, while Govinda Bhatta is presented as an interesting example of the blend of the philosophies of materialism and mysticism. But the portrayal of the duo as social outcasts who roam the countryside, drink, smoke and have "forgotten caste, creed and religion", who delve into each other's religious territory with glorious abandon, is bound to shock many.

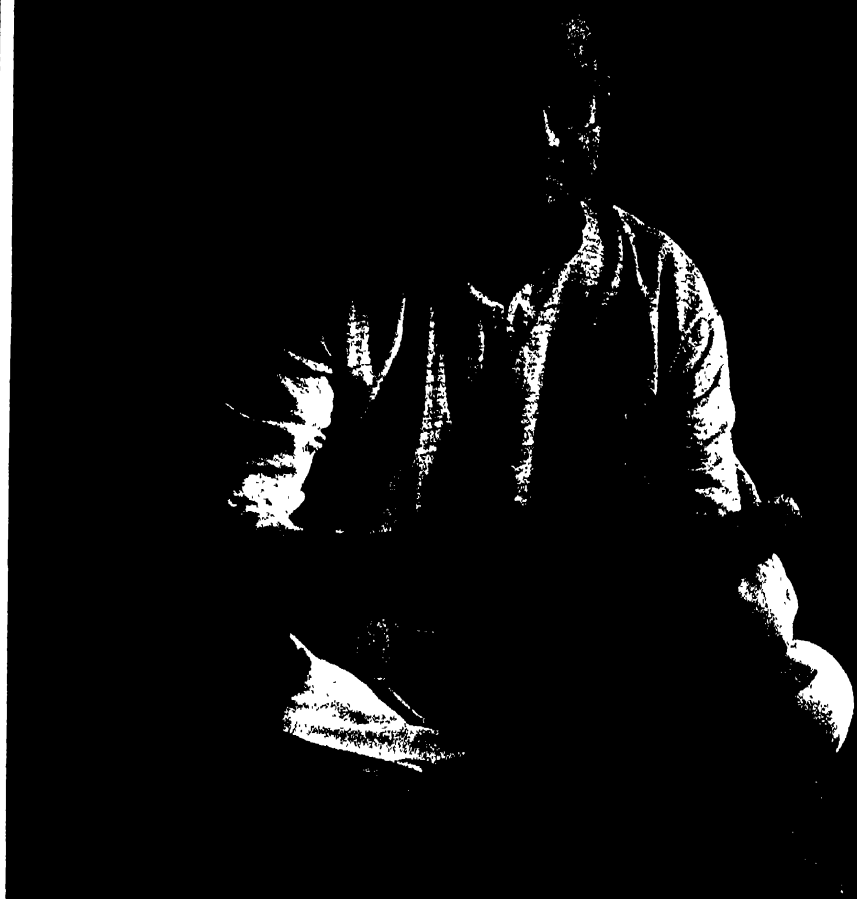
In the ultimate analysis, however, Sishunala Sharif comes through as the great romantic, the philosopher artist who goes his own way uncaring of religious and social norms, and organised philosophical thought. And he survives in the public imagination as an enduring symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

Girish Karnad as Govinda Bhatta



Soapstakes



He is the King of Soap. And his television offerings the Indian answer to *Dallas* and *Dynasty*.

Okay, maybe that's pushing it, but there's no denying that Manohar Shyam Joshi gave the Indian small screen an entirely new genre: the *desi* soap opera. It all began with *Hum Log*, India's longest running television serial, in which he related the story of a lower middle class joint family, in an urbane, quotidian style. Each episode ended with cine star Ashok Kumar delivering a homily on some homespun virtue or the other, or drawing home the moral lesson that the events on screen had just thrown up. The serial captured the im-

agination of the country, launched the small-time tele-stars into the big time and made Joshi's reputation.

Buniyaad proved that Joshi's success was no flash in the pan. The serial, which traced the history of a Punjabi family, before Partition and after, proved compulsive viewing—and not just for other Punjabis, either. The entire country stayed tuned in, episode after episode, sharing in the joys and sorrows of Masterji and Lajoji, and their assorted kin. As viewership figures mounted and the signature tune of *Buniyaad* made its way into our collective memory, Manohar Shyam Joshi became an established name.



A scene from *Kakkaji Kahl*: a powerful critique of Indian politics

Then, it was time for remakes. First, an indigenous version of *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, called *Mungeri Lal Ke Haseen Sapne*. The serial had Raghubir Yadav giving a convincing portrayal of a Bihari Mitty, complete with domineering wife and a less-than-satisfying career. There was the unmistakable Joshi touch, though—the character of Mungeri's father-in-law, complete with a rustic accent and robust down to earth good sense, who, very often, raised more laughs than Mungeri himself.

While at remakes, Joshi decided to try his hand at the BBC's satire on the Westminster system of government, *Yes, Minister*. The theme had infinite possibilities, especially in view of the *jee huzoor* culture that typifies Indian political life. So, Joshi dreamed up the character of Kakkaji, the archetypal small-town hick, who makes it to the capital, to wheel and deal his way into the corridors of power. Or, at the very least, into the drawing rooms of the high and mighty, where he can wield his influence best. The serial was a smash hit, with Om Puri's delivery of the punch line—a



trate instead on 'educating' the public, for the most part, with Congress(I) propaganda. So, Joshi was out.

It appears now that Manohar Shyam had seen it coming. So, wisely, he'd already begun exploring other options—the world of celluloid, for one. Ever since the success of *Hum Log*, Bombay had been wooing the star script writer, with lucrative offers coming in from the likes of Raj Kapoor and Ramesh Sippy (who worked closely with him on *Buniyaad*). The death of Kapoor put the project *Ghoongat Ke Pat Khol* on indefinite hold but Joshi went on to script two of Sippy's films—both of which, *Zameen* and *Bhrashtachar*, are currently on the floors, and slated for release later this year. The coming months will reveal whether the Joshi magic works on the large screen as well.

If it doesn't, there's always journalism and the Hindi novel, both of which Joshi has dabbled in at some time or the other. Before branching off into TV Joshi had been the editor of the English

literal translation of some Hindi idiom or the other—having the audience rolling in their favourite arm chairs. While viewers cheered and asked for more, critics hailed the serial as a powerful critique of Indian politics.

Perhaps that's where Joshi went wrong. In the K.K. Tewari view of the world there was no worse offence than to pillory (oh, horror!) politicians, even if they were small-time operators

such as Kakkaji. "It's abhorrent! It's shocking!" railed an indignant Tewari against the serial. "I wonder how it was ever permitted to be screened on TV." Both *Mungeri Lal* and *Kakkaji Kahin* had been hacked by Doordarshan before they went on the air, but this was the unkindest cut of all. The honeymoon with Mandi House was over. Tewari made clear that now that he had taken over, Doordarshan was going to junk the soap opera and the sit-com and concen-

weekly *Weekend Review* and of the Hindi publication *Saptahik Hindustan*, both belonging to the Hindustan Times group. And, in 1983, when he began work on *Hum Log*, he was widely recognised as a writer of Hindi fiction, with two novels, *Kurukuruswaha* and *Kasap*, to his credit.

Joshi attributes his versatility to his upbringing in a family that was "feudal, aristocratic and anglicised at the same time". His father, Prem Ballav Joshi, was an eminent musicologist, and the young Manohar may well have drifted into a career in music if his father hadn't passed away early. As it turned out, however, Joshi went on to college in Lucknow, after what he describes as a "multi-layered provincial schooling". Here he was first bitten by the Communist bug, though he was never a card holding member of the party. But in those days being a sympathiser was enough provocation for the government to draw up a dossier on him and put his name on police files—a fact that was to haunt Joshi through most of his professional life.

After a brief stint as a school teacher, Joshi made his way to Delhi, to ask



In Mungeri Lal Ke Haseen Sapne the Joshi touch was unmistakable, especially in the characterisation of Mungeri's father-in-law, with his Bihari accent and down-to-earth good sense

Feroze Gandhi at the *Indian Express* and Durga Das at *The Hindustan Times* for a job. They weren't too impressed with his claims of being able to write on "anything and everything". So, Joshi ended up taking a job in the Hindi service of All India Radio (AIR), and later with the Films Division. He recalls: "It was a good time to be in Delhi when writers like Nirmal Verma and Bhisham Sahni were being discovered and new theatre groups were sprouting.

Soon Joshi's greatest desire was fulfilled—he got a foothold in journalism, joining *Dinman*, the weekly magazine of the Times of India group. Says he, with some pride: "We brought irreverence into Indian journalism." *Saptahik Hindustan*, he says, began the trend of doing special issues of specific topics.

Buniyaad proved that Joshi's success was no flash in the pan. The serial, which traced the story of a Punjabi family before Partition and after, proved compulsive viewing



A scene from *Buniyaad* and (inset) Manohar Shyam Joshi: quality fare

Then Joshi got his big break. In 1983, S.S. Gill, the former secretary to the information and broadcasting ministry, called on him and some others, to devise a soap opera on the theme of population control, with the help of the Sabido television technology available with him. Joshi was given a room at the Doordarshan headquarters and the services of a typist, and *Hum Log* was created.

The serial started a veritable flood of such efforts, with prime time being reserved for sit-coms and familydramas, to use the trade jargon, some tear-jerkers, others rib-ticklers. Quality ranged from the bad to the indifferent. It took *Buniyaad* to bring quality back to the small screen. The serial involved big money; the Sippys got Rs 3 lakhs per

episode from Mudra Advertising. And Manohar Shyam Joshi was in the big league.

It was then that problems with Mandi House began. The Partition sequences of the serial were badly hacked and the authorities refused to telecast any scenes which showed the resentment that the old *Delhiwallahs* felt for the Punjabi refugees. Doordarshan didn't even want any revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh to be featured because they had the 'look of terrorists'.

After *Mungeri Lal* and *Kakkaji Kahin*, it was obvious that nothing that had any political connotations would be allowed to go on the air, without some censorship being exercised. The pilot of the latter serial was cleared by Mandi House in early 1989, only after being shot down

twice. And then, one compromise followed another. First the name of the serial had to be changed. *Netaji Kahin* was unacceptable to Doordarshan for obvious reasons—*Kakkaji Kahin* was just about tolerable. Worse was to follow. Dialogues which Mandi House considered potentially volatile were cut, leaving embarrassing gaps in the soundtrack. Joshi had to change the plot of the last episode after pressure from the authorities—instead of dealing with political dissidence, it centred on some innocuous trade unionists.

With *Mungeri Lal* the story was slightly different. Problems with Doordarshan were overshadowed by the serious differences that cropped up between Joshi and the producer of the serial, Prakash Jha, leading Joshi to drop out of the project mid-way.

Faced with such a situation a lesser mortal might have given up television as a bad job and moved on to the more lucrative world of feature films. But it says something for Joshi that he is clinging on to TV with his toenails. He reasons: "The money in films may be substantially more but there is too much uncertainty. For a serial, the schedules are set in advance and the returns are assured."

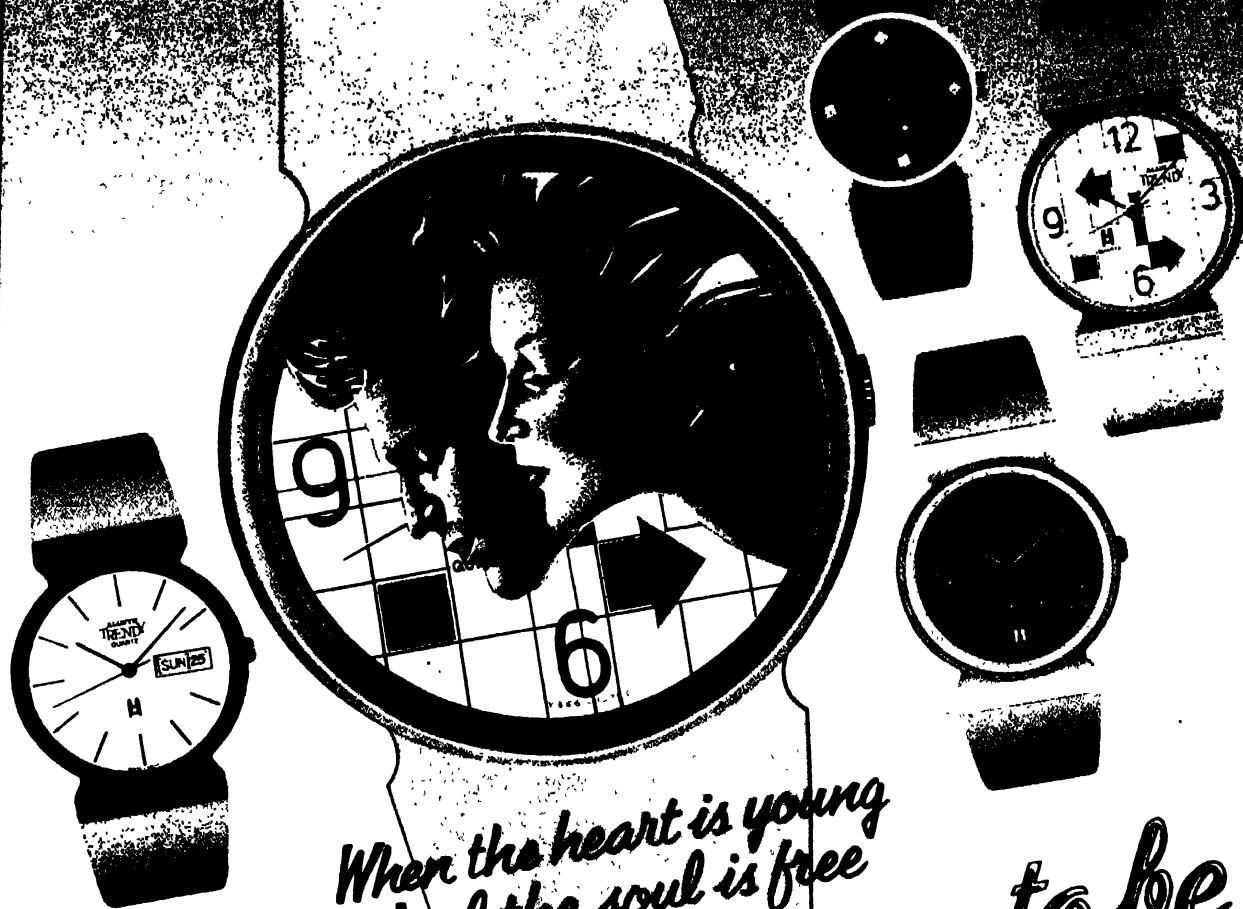
Among his future plans, Joshi numbers scripting a game show or talk show for the tube, and even now he has two projects pending before Mandi House for approval. Both are soap operas, epic in proportion and heavy on family ties. Yes, Joshi runs true to type.

The first pilot spans the period from 1830 to 1911. In the course of 104 episodes, the history of the country, from the days of *thuggee* to the holding of the Delhi Durbar will unfold, seen through the eyes of an ordinary middle-class family. "The idea," says Joshi, "is to give the viewer a ringside seat in the house of the neighbour who does not allow him inside."

The second serial is set in times when the Naxal movement was going great guns, and revolves around a judge living in Calcutta and his impressionable son, and on the love-hate relationship that exists between the two. The serial promises to be gripping fare, coming as it does from the creator of characters such as Shyam Lal, Veeranwali and Roshan Lal, who have since become part of television folk lore.

But will these serials ever see the light of the projector room? In view of Doordarshan's current obsession with programmes on Panchayati Raj and the *sarson ka saga*, probably not.

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi



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Taken for a ride

Allegations of malpractices abound at the Madras race co



In times when men 'fix' themselves to win races, it is stupid to expect that horses would run on merit. And sure enough, malpractices abound at the country's race courses. In the south, however, matters have taken a serious turn with Madras Racing Undertaking (MRU) being accused of fixing races, thus ensuring that the ordinary punter, on whom racing survives, gets less than the run for his money.

Not surprisingly, the prime target of this campaign is M.A.M. Ramaswamy (or MAM as he is known to friends), who, it is alleged, runs Madras racing as his private fiefdom. Rumours about MAM's questionable practices abound. Prominent race horse owners have charged, though strictly off the record, that Ramaswamy instructs his trainers and jockeys to 'pull' his horses—to ensure that they don't win. Thus, over a period of time his horses are demoted to

a lower class, where, pitted against weaker competition, they can win at will.

And now, Madras has a horse owner with gumption, and some say foolhardiness enough, to go on the record. M.A. Khan, who dares to take on the might of M.A.M. Ramaswamy. Mindful that Madras racing is conducted under the auspices of the Tamil Nadu government, Khan dashed off a telex to the state chief minister M. Karunanidhi marked "Very very confidential—for your eyes only," detailing his grievances, and holding M.A.M. squarely responsible for the abysmal state of affairs at the MRU. There was no response from the CM's office.

Perhaps Karunanidhi thought he had done his bit. Only some time ago, the chief minister had convened a meeting of the MRU managing committee to look into allegations of wrong-doing. This, in

response to *The Hindu's* decision to discontinue reporting racing news to protest the misdoings on the course. The paper wrote, in a severe indictment of the authorities: "The results of the races continue to be 'fixed' by certain elements that have chosen to defile standards with impunity, exploiting the masterly inactivity on the part of the racing authorities and thus to deprive the betting public, the backbone of racing, of a proper run for their money. In short, what has been going on is downright skulduggery and worse."

Worried at this strident protest, and afraid that the criticism would affect his 'good friend' M.A.M. Ramaswamy adversely, Karunanidhi acted promptly. A meeting of the MRU managing committee was convened and G. Kasturi, editor of *The Hindu* called to take part in the proceedings. (The paper's publisher S. Rangarajan was already involved in



the discussions, being on the MRU committee). MAM was also present and the talks concluded satisfactorily. For, the next day, *The Hindu* disclosed that the MRU delegation had assured the CM that racing would be conducted in a fair manner. *The Hindu* resumed reporting on the events at Guindy (the Madras race course) and all, one presumed, was well.

But one had reckoned without M.A. Khan, who continued sniping away at the authorities. This was in keeping with his track record. Khan had raced his horses at Bangalore earlier and fallen foul of the jockeys' association there because of his "suspicious nature". In early 1988 he accused his jockey P.A. Woods of pulling his horse Coup de Fex. The jockeys, in retaliation, refused to run Khan's horses unless he apologised to Woods. The horse owner complied only

a week later and was literally 'black-mailed' into having Woods ride his horses again. But even before the season was out, Khan was at it again, crying foul at all jockeys. Says R.I. Butfoy, secretary of the Jockeys Association of India of M.A. Khan and his brother G. Khan: "In a single year they changed seven trainers and complained against at least 15 jockeys."

Then they shifted base to Madras to draw attention to M.A.M. Ramaswamy's alleged misdeeds. Ramaswamy, charged Khan, owns most of the fit horses on the track and manipulates all results. "MAM is the monarch at the MRU," he says. "Ask any punter or professional and they hate and fear him. The MRU is in fact run by him. Who shall take action against him when they are on his payroll?"

Khan continues: "My horses run to the whims of the monarch. And to that of the professionals (trainers and jockeys) who see to it that they shy away from the winning post, even by a small margin." Khan maintains that if the runs of his horses are scrutinised by experts and his complaint investigated independently he would be "entitled to a massive award for damages caused by a state and its functionaries against a defenceless individual".

But even in the face of such certainty, proof of complicity is required. And this is very difficult to obtain. The recently concluded Nilgiris Derby at Ooty is a case in point. Five horses were scheduled to run, of whom four belonged

to MAM and the fifth—Kalamaris—was owned (jointly) by Suresh Mahindra and trained by Dhariwal. Kalamaris was tipped the favourite.

On the morning of the race, the MRU custodian, N. Haribhaskar was woken up by a panic call from the club secretary and asked to rush to the race course. Haribhaskar obeyed the summons, to be confronted by a distraught Dhariwal who asked permission to withdraw Kalamaris from the race. He had found a suspicious substance floating in the colt's water bucket.

The club officials were in a quandary. If they allowed Kalamaris to withdraw, it would lead to a farcical situation—the four horses left in the fray all belonged to MAM. To prevent this, they offered Dhariwal the benefit of the doubt—the colt would be allowed to run and his race condoned if he finished last. If, however,

M.A.M. Ramaswamy with his horse Sugar Daddy, winner of the Nilgiris Gold Cup: monopoly hold?



"Why blame me?" asks M.A.M. Ramaswamy. "I treat my horses well. They can't win if they starve their horses. It depends on how much time and effort one puts on a horse"

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he came within the first three, the stake money would be withheld until the results of the dope test were available.

The offer was refused out of hand. While Dhariwal did not want to risk the disqualification of the colt and his own suspension in the event of the dope test showing positive, Suresh Mahindra the co-owner of Kalamaris, had more pressing problems on his mind. He asked the stewards: "Will the MRU pay compensation if my colt collapses on the track." The stewards, with great reluctance, allowed the withdrawal.

So the Nilgiris Derby was run by four stablemates of whom Dashing Groom won the race though Popularity had opened as the favourite at odds on. But the win did raise lots of eyebrows with *The Hindu* labelling the race a "classical farce". The allegations levelled by M.A. Khan among others, was that with Kalamaris conveniently removed from the track, Ramaswamy 'chosé' his winner to pile in big money at the race.

Suspensions such as these only received a fillip when the dope tests of the



M. Karunanidhi: in charge of an activity he'd abolished

Fixing of races isn't all there is to it. The Madras race course has seen a fair amount of political interference, too, culminating in a government takeover of its affairs.

It began in the Seventies, with the DMK in power. Racing was dominated by those loyal to the AIADMK chief M.G. Ramachandran, and chief minister Karunanidhi was advised that he should abolish horse racing to

Who reigns at Guindy?

The Tamil Nadu government—finally

ginal petition regarding the abolition of racing was already pending. On the court's recommendation, a committee of management was formed to oversee the work of horse racing.

In the meanwhile, M.A.M. Ramaswamy, falling victim to a disinformation campaign, withdrew the petition against the abolition of horse racing, in the fond belief that it would mean a return to the *status quo* that prevailed before Karunanidhi's shock decision. MGR seized this opportunity to declare that with the withdrawal of the petition, horse racing was gone from Madras for good.

Checkmated, the members pleaded in the Supreme Court that the withdrawal of the petition was a 'mistake'. In addition, the club authorities, including trainers, jockeys and syces, filed a writ of mandamus in the court, in response to which the court ruled that the government continue to pay them their salaries.

To raise the money, intervenue betting was allowed by the committee in October 1986 (with the permission of the court), and continued for two years.

In July 1988, some MRC members petitioned the Supreme Court that since intervenue racing had been going on in Madras, live racing should be allowed too. The court left the decision to the committee, which in accordance with M.A.M. Ramaswamy's wishes, promptly gave the go-ahead. Racing resumed in Madras and a grand reception was awarded to Ramaswamy in recognition of his efforts in this direction.

The original case filed against the abolition of horse racing is still pending in the Supreme Court. And while it gathers dust, the statues of horses put up by Karunanidhi to mark his historic decision, continue to gleam at the Anna Road junction. Only, ironically, it's now Karunanidhi's government which is running the races.



M.A.M. Ramaswamy being felicitated on the reopening of the Madras race course: recognition of his efforts

race were finally made available. The water had been drugged with Chlorpromazine—trade name Largactel—which affects the brain, heart, liver and eyes. It leads to blurring of vision and acts as a general depressant. Aimed with this information the MRU custodian promptly went on the offensive. Suitable action, he said, would be taken against the trainer for his negligence, because all said and done, it is the trainer's responsibility to take care of his horse, while the MRU can only provide the overall security and stable facilities. Dhariwal's only defence was that the stables were not adequately protected and that the club has not provided basic facilities in this connection.

whittle down MGR's influence.

Hence the government order, effective from August 1984, banning betting on horse racing. The Madras Racing Club (MRC) petitioned the High Court; only to be told that racing fell within the jurisdiction of the state government, which was well within its rights to ban the activity. The members, however, managed to get a stay order from the Supreme Court.

Then, it was MGR's turn to flex his muscles. In April 1986, the AIADMK government took over the administration of the club, arguing that rampant malpractices necessitated this.

The takeover was challenged in the Supreme Court, where the ori-

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M.A. Khan (extreme right): taking on M.A.M. Ramaswamy

That still leaves the basic question—who drugged Kalamaris when he was all set to win the race? While suspicion centres on MAM—who gained most from the colt's withdrawal—there's no denying that any of the bookies too could have attempted the task. After all, they had collected huge bets on the colt and stood to make big money in the event of his withdrawal. To explore these possibilities the MRU ordered an enquiry into the incident. MRU custodian Haribhaskar told SUNDAY: "We have also lodged a police complaint at Ooty, the first time an outside investigation has been called for."

M.A.M. Ramaswamy, for his part, vociferously denies all allegations of wrong-doing. "Sheikh Muhammed wins all the classics in London," he says. "Can they stop him? He has the best of stables and owns about 1,500 horses." Ramaswamy, too, has an impressive stable—he owns over a hundred horses—all of very good stock. "Why blame me?" he asks querulously, "I treat my horses well. They can't win if they starve their horses. It depends on how much time and effort one puts on a horse."

Ramaswamy's friends stand by him too, the standard defence being that MAM—a member of the royal family of Chettinad—has enough money of his

own and doesn't need to fix races to rake in the stuff. Whatever the truth of the matter, there's no doubt the MAM rules at MRU. So much so, that even M.A. Khan, who never tires of sniping at him, tried to 'buy' peace initially—he purchased a few old horses from Ramaswamy at fancy prices. But that didn't work the

miracles expected and Khan, to escape from the stranglehold of the club authorities and jockeys-trainers combine, sought a trainer's licence for his brother. Only to be told that it was impossible. "There are certain rules," explains N. Haribhaskar. "The applicant should have been a trainer's assistant for a considerable time and have adequate knowledge about horses." On neither of these counts, apparently, did Khan's brother qualify.

But why do people fix races? Perhaps the answer lies in the sheer quantum of money involved. The attendance on a regular race day at Guindy is about 12,000 and classics have seen crowds of 50,000. Mahalaxmi Race Course in Bombay, which is the largest in the country, would easily be several times more crowded. Estimates R.I. Butfoy: "Off hand, there must be at least a million rupees changing hands on every single race course in the country. In Tamil Nadu, for instance, the betting tax of 15 per cent yields about Rs 5 crores every year to the state treasury." Admits prominent MRU luminary R. Ramakrishnan: "The day when racing was the sport of kings and princes is over. Today it is big business, which involves both corruption and nepotism, you can't escape that."

So, every punter remains alive to the



N. Haribhaskar

M.A. Khan's brother was refused a licence because as N. Haribhaskar, custodian of the Madras race course, says: "The applicant should have been a trainer's assistant for a considerable time and have adequate knowledge about horses"

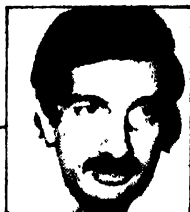
Horseplay

Racing frauds and other stories

Racing frauds begin from the moment a horse is born. Manipulation of pedigree to ensure fancy prices for the stud farm is common. Good horses are frequently kept away from auction sales and sold privately—with evasion of sales tax. On many occasions animals are sold on the basis of false claims. Says race horse owner M.A. Khan: "Take my Hellenic Hit for instance. She never won a race but an auctions sale book printed in Bombay proclaimed she had won a race just to deceive the client into buying her brother."

Generally a race is fixed by pulling a horse and allowing the other to win the race. It works like this. The ordinary punters go by media tips, stable gossip, and 'inside information'. The punters back a horse which is supposed to be a sure winner and the 'connections' or their representatives back another. The latter wins with jockeys executing the fix and the ordinary race-goer is taken for a ride. The owner, of course, comes in for a share of the booty.

Some manipulators work long distance. They bribe the telephone department to connect them to the race course permanently. They listen in to the running commentary and change the odds accordingly. Sometimes they are connected to



P.G. Belliappa, the chairman of the Bangalore Turf Club, says: "The theory is that the bookmakers are the evil people. Since they are in danger of losing money they fix the races"

BHAGWAN SINGH

the race courses in other cities as well. It is believed that bookmakers pay about Rs 1,000 per phone every month to the telephone staff for their cooperation.

On several occasions members of the underworld fix races too. There is the famous Bombay don who visits Bangalore regularly during the racing season, summons trainers and jockeys to his hotel room, issues instructions as to which race should be fixed and makes a tidy pile every year.

Says P.G. Belliappa, the chairman of the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC): "The theory is that the bookmakers are the evil people. Since they are in danger of losing money they fix the races." If that is true, one solution to the problem would be to dismiss the bookies and go in for 'tote monopoly', by which punters buy the tickets only from the club. In the many international racing centres where this is practised, the government and the club take their percentage share from the tote and the balance is distributed among the winners. There is one problem, though. This method might help in getting rid of the stand bookies, but what of the many illegal ones operating? As Belliappa says: "The inflow of money at the BTC is Rs 50-60 crores annually and illegal betting could be ten times that."

One way of ensuring that races are run on merit would be to get a very good handicapper on whose judgement a horse is given its weights. If a good one is deliberately loaded with a light weight, it would considerably improve its chances of winning. In fact racing circles in Madras agree that after Ebenezer Dharma took over as handicapper, the MRU races provide much keener contests. In fact, out of a total of 181 races in Ooty this season, as many as 123 have been photo finishes.

And with the induction of electronic gadgetry, which makes it possible to show slow motion replays of races to prevent on-track malpractices, matters can only improve.

possibility of a fix. And the fact that races can be manipulated lends greater credence to "inside information" which comes in the form of 'tips' from trainers, jockeys and even syces. As chairman of the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) P.G. Belliappa says: "The race course lives on rumours." It is the jockey who is ultimately responsible for a fix—he has to execute the command of "giving the horse a run" that is, ensuring that he pulls short of winning.

Not surprisingly then, the jockey becomes what Butfoy calls "the convenient scapegoat". While he may be suspended for "pulling a horse" the owner and trainer who are also in it, and raking in good money by their manipulation, escape unscathed. Says Butfoy: "The stewards always say that the jockey could refuse to pull and complain. But can he?" Of the 500-odd jockeys in

the country six or seven such as Aslam Khader, V. Shinde are in the big time and there are only about 20 who earn between Rs 50,000 to 1 lakh a year. Others lead a hand to mouth existence and can hardly afford to antagonise their

Despite the obvious malfeasance, punters continue to flock to race courses, feverishly betting on current favourites or that mythical "dark horse" in the hope of finally hitting the jackpot

powerful employers.

Things have only got worse with the entry of the new rich owners who are into it for quick money. If the entry of such tycoons as Vijay Mallya into the business has led to higher prize money and made the game more attractive, the unrealistic taxing by the government is forcing the clubs to let small-time owners in to make easy money. Despite these and other obvious malfeasance, punters continue to flock to race courses, feverishly betting on current favourites or that mythical "dark horse" in the hope of finally hitting the jackpot. Though the hope proves futile on most occasions the crowds at the race courses never thin. Perhaps this one is best referred to the community's psychologists.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras with Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

The climbdown

Both sides—India and Sri Lanka—compromise to effect a face-saving solution to the diplomatic crisis

SRI LANKA

Just when the two countries appeared to be heading for a diplomatic disaster, India and Sri Lanka reached an understanding at the eleventh hour to save their bilateral relations and avoid a possible war.

With the signing of the joint-communique by the Indian high commissioner, L.L. Mehrotra and the Sri Lankan foreign secretary, Bernard Tilekeratne, in the presence of President Ranasinghe Premadasa, in Colombo on 28 July, there was relief in both the capitals where peace-makers burnt midnight oil for three days trying to avoid a crisis across the Palk Straits.

The communique, signed barely a few hours before the 29 July deadline set by Premadasa for the withdrawal of the IPKF, jettisoned all the controversial demands raised by the two sides and confined itself to just two main issues: India would re-commence the withdrawal of the IPKF on 29 July and, on the same day, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne, would lead a high-power delegation to Delhi to work out a permanent solution to the problem.

President Premadasa welcomed the new agreement as a "turning point" in Indo-Sri Lankan relations and said that "now we must forget our differences, put the past behind us and move forward." Later in the evening, he appeared on the state television to thank India for agreeing to re-commence the IPKF's withdrawal at his request and thereby honouring Sri Lanka's sovereignty and independence. "Every citizen in the country and the world community will be overjoyed at the turn of events. It is an exemplary act on the part of India to respond to my request," the President declared.

High commissioner L.L. Mehrotra, announcing the breakthrough to Indian journalists in Colombo, acclaimed it as "the emergence of a new dawn in Indo-Sri Lankan relations". Back home, he said, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi

reciprocated Premadasa's sentiments.

The new agreement was signed even as troops on both sides were preparing to tackle the post 29 July events that were expected to be confrontational, with Premadasa insisting on his deadline and Delhi responding with a flat 'no'. At about 11 o'clock in the morning, the IPKF commander, Lt Gen A.S. Kalkat, was reiterating the Indian position to a group of visiting journalists that there was no question of the IPKF withdrawing from Sri Lanka.

"My mandate includes provision of security and peace for all in the North-Eastern Province and to keep the Sri Lankan forces in their barracks, as in the

the sensitive points in the North-Eastern Province that the Sri Lankan forces were getting ready for a showdown with the IPKF. Some days earlier, the EPRLF had alleged that Sri Lankan troops were being amassed at the Karainagar naval base in the Jaffna Peninsula with a view to deploying them on 29 July as the sole authority responsible for maintaining law and order.

A day before the deadline, general secretary G. Gnanasekaran of ENDLF another pro-India Tamil group, said a fresh contingent of 2,000 Sri Lankan troops, had joined the Eraperiya Kulam Camp in Vavuniya district. Also, over 4,000 troops were amassed at the Anuradhapura-Saliapura army camp, and of them 2,000 had already taken up combat positions in the border areas of Killinochi and Vavuniya districts, he alleged.

Added to all this was the startling



IPKF soldiers leaving Sri Lanka: peace at last?

T. RAMAMOORTHY

past two years. There has been no change. We will continue to function in the same manner. If anyone tries to change this by force, my soldiers will respond to this," Kalkat had told reporters who had flown in from Madras, even as high commissioner Mehrotra was busy finalising the joint-communique in Colombo.

Reports had also been coming in from

revelation made to this correspondent by a senior IPKF officer. He said all the major Sri Lankan army camps were getting tunnels dug up around them and anti-aircraft guns were being positioned facing the nearby IPKF camps. "It appears they are preparing for a confrontation, because in some areas these guns are pretty close to our air strips," the officer had said, on condition of anonymity.

The Sri Lankan side, too, was visibly nervous. They feared the possibility of a commando-type operation by India to rescue the staff of the Indian high commission and their families, if hostilities erupted after the expiry of the presidential deadline. Even more ominous were the rumours that the operation, codenamed 'Jupiter', also envisaged a simultaneous deployment of Indian troops in the plantation areas in the central provinces, where Tamils surrounded by Sinhala settlements, felt

President Premadasa welcomed the new agreement as a "turning point" in Indo-Sri Lankan relations and said that "now we must forget our differences, put the past behind us and move forward"

particularly vulnerable.

With both the sides thus flexing their muscles, the EPRLF chief minister Varadaraja Perumal declared at Trincomalee that if the IPKF was forced to leave the island, he would go ahead with his threat of unilaterally declaring 'Eelam'. Complaining bitterly that Colombo was imposing an economic embargo on the Tamil province with the 29 July deadline approaching, Perumal sent a telegram to Mehrotra asking him to use his good offices with Premadasa to ease the difficulties caused by the suspension of water and fuel supplies and the disconnection of power lines in the province. "If the Sri Lankan troops attack the IPKF, I will declare Eelam with myself as its Prime Minister," Perumal had said.

The Indian community in Colombo too was getting panicky, specially after the JVP bombed Indian banks and other establishments on 26 July. But those close to the power centres in Colombo and New Delhi were optimistic that a solution would emerge. Premadasa had sent word through a SAARC emissary, the Pakistani foreign minister, Sahibzada Yakub Khan, to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 25 July that he would not insist on the total withdrawal of the IPKF by 29 July and it would be adequate if Delhi merely announced re-commencement of withdrawals on that day.

With the signing of the Mehrotra-Tilekeratne agreement, an Indian ship, INS Magar, reached Trincomalee on 29 July to bring home the first batch of about 600 troops to signal the re-commencement of the withdrawal process. "The next batch will leave only after the talks the Sri Lankan delegation is having in Delhi ends," said an IPKF source.

The outcome of the agreement has been a temporary halt to any further souring of bilateral relations. It is too early to say whether the new development will stabilise into a lasting friendship between the two suspicious neighbours. It would be a tricky thing for Colombo and New Delhi to work out a mutually acceptable formula which accommodates the pro-India groups now in power in the Tamil province, as well as the hostile LTTE.

Also of interest would be the influence of the peace deal on the Sinhala extremist group JVP's campaign against Premadasa. It had demanded the total withdrawal of the IPKF and it remains to be seen how the ultra-nationalist group is going to react to what at the moment might appear to them as an effort by Premadasa to buy time.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras



A nursery at Eden Hospital, overcrowded

Heartbreak hospital

Unhygienic conditions cause the death of many new-born babies in a leading Calcutta hospital

WEST BENGAL

Number of deaths of new-born babies because of negligence of medical personnel at the Eden Hospital of Calcutta Medical College in July 1989: 22.

Number of medical personnel prosecuted or suspended: 0.

This is the story (told by the two figures) of West Bengal's leading government-run hospital. The recent spurt in the deaths of new-born infants was played down as "high but not abnormal," by Dr Rupen Chatterjee, the hospital superintendent. Yet, day after day, mothers who had given birth to healthy babies returned home with their dead children in their arms. The babies died of urinary and respiratory tract infection, tetanus, and of "natural causes" explain the hospital authorities.

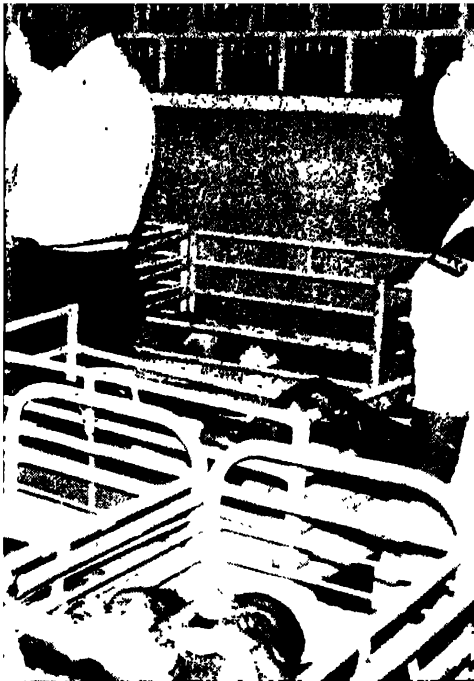
"I am surprised that this kind of thing does not happen more often," said a doctor pointing at the overcrowded maternity ward. Many of the single beds are occupied by two women and their babies. Other patients lie on makeshift mattresses on the floor with visitors and medical attendants jumping over them. Even the visitors sit on the beds occupied by more than two patients.

A report submitted to the state government attributes the deaths at the Eden Hospital to "neo-natal infection", an accurate assessment considering the unhygienic conditions in the nursery and the delivery room. Medical services seem to be paralysed: the bedsheets are grimy and stained, the operating theatres are not disinfected, towels are never cleaned and even outsiders have access to operation theatres.

Superintendent Chatterjee believes that there is "no option but to keep two mothers with their new-born babies on a single bed". In the same breath he says that "there is every chance of the babies developing cross infection since routine sanitary measures cannot be taken under these circumstances".

State health minister Prasanta Sur claimed to be completely unaware of the deplorable condition of the hospital wards and is resigned to being unable to make any substantial improvements. "I

Health minister Sur was dissatisfied with the performances of some nurses and doctors. "I have tried to motivate them...but if they are indifferent what can I do?" he asks



am helpless. I am willing to resign, but get someone who can get the job done," he said. Sur also claimed to be dissatisfied with the performances of some of the nurses and doctors. "I have tried to motivate them and give them a greater sense of service. But if they are totally indifferent, what can I do?" he asked. The problem, believes Sur, is insurmountable largely because there are far too many people chasing far too few beds.

Since the district hospitals are in even worse shape, hundreds of people from the districts come to Calcutta's five big government hospitals for proper medical attention, which in any case, are under-equipped to handle large-scale epidemics. At one point last week, 362 women were admitted to the maternity wards of the Eden Hospital. There are only 275 beds. "We never say no to patients. We admit them even if there are no beds left. What are we going to do if something happens to the patient after we refuse to admit him?" asks a doctor.

A similar situation prevails in most of Calcutta's big government run hospitals like the Nilratan Sarkar Hospital, the R. G. Kar Hospital and the Chittaranjan Hospital. The problem is less acute at the SSKM Hospital where there are fewer free beds.

The medical logjam will persist unless the West Bengal government's health department increases the number of beds in the government hospitals. In 1976 for example, about 6,000 births were recorded at the Nilratan Sarkar Hospital. This year, there are likely to be over 10,000. The number of beds has not increased, only the number of births and the suffering of the poor.

Srinjoy Chowdhury/Calcutta

The law and lawlessness

Policemen gangrape two minor Bodo girls in Kokrajhar district as men flee the villages

ASSAM

There are very few men left in the villages of Kokrajhar. Periodic swoops by the police to flush out Bodo militants belonging to the Assam Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), who are fighting for a separate state of the tribals, have driven most of the menfolk into the surrounding forests and even women flee the villages at the mere sound of an approaching vehicle. As a result, paddy fields which should have been humming with activities in June and July, the sowing season, lie barren and empty.

While police action in the villages have been a continual phenomenon over the last two years, the securitymen went berserk at a village called Goybari on 29 June. They gangraped two minor Bodo girls, molested and beat up 30 women, damaged almost every house in the village and looted property worth several thousand rupees. Even the well from which the villagers drew drinking water was not spared: it was contaminated with kerosene.

One of the victims of the gangrape is Nable Brahma, who is barely 10 years old, and the other, Ashwini, is just 15. Still too young to realise the full implica-

AATWF president Pramilla Rani Brahma: seeking justice

PADMA PATOR



tions of the episode, Nable said that on seeing the police approach, she fled to the neighbouring hamlet, Lauduan. But the policemen followed her there and raped her in turn. Ashwini, who took shelter in the house of Dhaneswar Brahma, who works in the irrigation department and happens to be one of the more well-off men in the village, could not save herself. The constables forced their way into Brahma's house, beat up his wife, and while some held his daughter at gunpoint, the others dragged Ashwini behind the building and raped her.

That evening, members of the All Assam Tribal Women's Federation (AATWF) took the girls to the primary health centre at Banargaon, but the doctor in charge pleaded his inability to give a report after examining the girls for, he said, he was not authorised to do so. Next day, the AATWF lodged a complaint with the district police who in turn, directed the Kokrajhar Civil Hospital to examine the girls. The hospital report confirmed that they had been raped.

Said Pramilla Rani Brahma, AATWF president: "After the rape of a woman by some policemen at Bhumka, in January 1988 (for which the Guwahati High Court passed strictures against the district administration) there was a lull in police actions against women. But now that they find the men are not around, they have again started harassing and torturing us. Probably they want us to leave our homes also and live like fugitives in the jungles. They don't want us to work our land, because they know that we can do everything that the men could. They want to starve us by preventing us from cultivating our crop."

If police atrocities form one part of the story in Kokrajhar, the other is the alarming increase in the violence unleashed allegedly by the Bodo agitators. "It is a chicken-and-egg problem. The agitators say they have been forced to resort to violence because of the police repression while the police claim that the Bodo militants have repeatedly made them their target. After all, how long can they be expected to remain silent?" asked a government official. The last straw, according to him, was the bomb blast at Bhurtinali on the Bhutan border on 27 June which killed several policemen travelling in a bus. "But that, certainly, does not justify attacks on innocent men and women," he conceded.

Radhika Ramasheshan/Guwahati

Nature's fury

Rain and storm lash the state leaving hundreds dead and many missing

MAHARASHTRA Fierce winds and driving rain lashed Maharashtra on the night of 23 July and continued to wreck havoc for the next three days. With 500 people dead, many missing in the high seas and communication systems mangled by the passing storm, this monsoon fury turned out to be the worst in recent years. The cyclone caught the unware and the administration unprepared to cope with the havoc.

Yet, the meteorological office claims that it knew of the approaching storm 24 hours before it struck and is said to have forewarned the administration. But the people were not cautioned. Ramdas Sandhe, secretary of the Fishermen's Action Committee (FAC) said they knew nothing of the storm even on 23 July morning. Sandhe said that the customs department had not apparently been informed, for it made no effort to prevent fishing trawlers from sailing out to sea that day. Besides the fact that many people were killed by flash floods, a large number of fishermen were missing even on 27 July and Damodar Tandel, secretary general of FAC, accused the fisheries department of criminal negligence, for, he said, the department knew that a storm was approaching but did not warn the fishermen.

Chagga Bhuppal, a former mayor of Bombay, criticised the government for "leaving everything to the almighty" instead of taking remedial measures and Janata Party leader Farokh Khan said that the municipal commissioner should own moral responsibility for the water-logging and the hardships caused to the slum dwellers. But additional municipal commissioner Girish Gokhale defended the civic administration by saying that never before had the city experienced so much rain—86 mm in 14 hours.

But the question that is now being asked is whether the meteorological office, despite all its sophisticated equipments, had failed to gauge the magnitude of the impending storm or whether it was the administration that failed to take the weathermen's warnings seriously. Maybe, an inquiry should now be ordered to find out who was at fault.

Oiga Tella/Bombay

Delayed departures

Shortage of planes and pilots forces Indian Airlines to cancel about 20 flights from Calcutta every month



Indian Airlines planes at Dum Dum airport: grounded

AVIATION There is never any certainty about Indian Airlines (IA) flights taking off on time, particularly in Calcutta. Shortage of pilots and non-availability of aircraft have led to repeated flight cancellations and delays since the middle of June, causing much inconvenience to passengers. According to an IA spokesman, the airline is forced to cancel about 20 flights and delay about 70 per cent of them every month on an average.

The number of pilots in IA dropped abruptly about six months back when 39 pilots quit the organisation and joined foreign airways which offered them bigger pay packets and more perks. Another exodus of about 100 pilots, who had applied for jobs with Saudi Arabia's Gulf Air, was stopped by the government of India which refused to give them clearance. According to a spokesman of the Indian Commercial Pilots' Association (ICPA), a pilot in Saudi Arabia earned about Rs 1.5 lakhs per year.

There are altogether 80 pilots in IA's Calcutta base, 25 of whom fly Airbuses and 55 operate its Boeing fleet. As for pilots in the rank of commanders, there are 12 and six for Airbuses and Boeings respectively, when, according to the ICPA spokesman, there should be about 60 Boeing commanders in Calcutta alone.

IA's regional director Capt. R. Kakkar admits that the airline faces a shortage of pilots, but hastens to add that this is a global phenomenon. Developing countries, says Kakkar, prefer to hire experienced pilots from the IA and pay them high salaries instead of building up their own pool of pilots because of the high costs involved in training them. "A vacuum was created because some pilots retired, some left IA and others joined refresher courses." Kakkar, however, is confident that the situation will improve considerably once the 80-odd pilots who have been recruited by IA and are presently undergoing training in France and Hyderabad, joined the contingent as regulars.

As for the shortage of aircraft, which frequently makes IA flight schedules go haywire, Kakkar attributes the problem

IA's regional director Capt. R. Kakkar admits that the airline faces a shortage of pilots but hastens to add that this is a global phenomenon



to grounding of planes because of technical snags and bad weather. Lack of spares also poses problems in some stations. Moreover, IA does not allow night flights in the Assam sector and if for some reason a plane is unable to fly out during the day, it is held up till the following morning and that upsets flight schedules.

Kakkar predicts that IA will remain hamstrung till about September and expects the situation to improve markedly after 19 Airbuses acquired by the airline are pressed into service. The new planes will not only increase the IA's passenger capacity but will also minimise technical faults that delay departures.

However, a veteran pilot, who prefers to remain anonymous, says that the crisis developed after two pilots, sons of two high-ups in the IA management, who, along with 12 to 15 other Boeing commanders, were transferred to Delhi from Calcutta about three years back. Since then, the airline has been requisitioning pilots from other bases to operate aircraft in the Calcutta sector and spending as much as Rs 1,000 per day on each pilot for putting them up in posh hotels, besides incurring huge expenses in arranging accommodation for stranded passengers of cancelled or delayed flights. So, while air fares were hiked twice on 1 and 9 July by IA, the services remain dismal without any sign of an immediate improvement.

Nihar Ghosh/Calcutta

The politics of rescue

Politicians shield an IAS officer indicted on charges of corruption by the CBI

BIHAR

'Line your pockets' happens to be the catchphrase among bureaucrats and politicians in the state and even the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is under pressure not to carry its probes too far. Whenever a bureaucrat finds himself in trouble, politicians promptly come to his rescue by trying to stall penal actions, no matter how serious the charges.

The politician-bureaucrat nexus became evident as daylight in a case involving B.K. Singh, IAS, the suspended commissioner of Darbhanga district. On 8 December 1986, the Patna branch of the CBI had registered a case (No. 48/86) against Singh on charges of corruption and conducted a raid in his house. The search revealed that Singh owned property worth about Rs 25 lakhs, which was grossly disproportionate to his income.

According to CBI sources, Singh had gone into hiding following the raid and the government suspended him on 16 December, 1986. The appeals of his counsel, seeking anticipatory bail for Singh were rejected by both the lower court and the Patna High Court and Singh was remanded to judicial custody after he was arrested on 20 February, 1987. Two months later, Singh was, however, released on bail as the CBI failed to frame the charges and produce them before the High Court.

The CBI completed its investigation in February this year and submitted its report to the department of personnel and training of the government of India, which alone can prosecute an IAS officer, after getting permission from the President of India. In its report, the CBI had said that Singh possessed unaccountable assets worth Rs 25 lakhs, which included National Savings Certificates and other securities worth Rs 11 lakhs, a bank balance of Rs four lakhs, gold valued at Rs five lakhs, cash amounting to Rs one lakh, and a palatial building in Patna worth over Rs six lakhs.

But, surprisingly, a month after the report was submitted, the department of personnel and training returned the

document to the CBI in Patna, advising it to place it before the state government for the latter's comments. This was an unprecedented move, the CBI told the department of personnel.

CBI sources argue that since the state government had no authority to prosecute an IAS officer, it has no locus *standi* in this case either. What they find more intriguing is the fact that the department of personnel and training did not find it necessary to retain a copy of the report to forward it to the President. Instead, the report is said to be lying in the chief minister's office and no action has been taken although three months have elapsed since it was submitted. Rumours doing the rounds in Patna suggest that Singh has succeeded in influencing the top officials of the government of India after Satyendra Narayan became the state's chief minister, the allusion being that the Congress(I) has come to his rescue.

The CBI submitted its report to the department of personnel and training. But, surprisingly, the document was returned without any action being taken against Singh

Subsequently, the CBI discovered yet another skeleton in Singh's cupboard. It has been alleged that Singh purchased National Savings Certificates worth lakhs of rupees in the names of some of his relatives by forging their signatures. So, the CBI registered another case (No. RC1/5/89/Patna) against Singh on 27 January this year. But, strangely, the CBI's deputy director, coordination, in New Delhi, sent a wireless message to the CBI, Patna, restraining it from arresting Singh in connection with the new case.

CBI officials say that such a message is unprecedented in the history of the organisation and emphasise the fact that the order is *ultra vires* as it goes against Section 41 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which empowers an investigating officer to make arrests. The case has not, however, been closed yet and Singh's fate still hangs in the balance though he appears to have the state's political heavyweights on his side.

Jaishankar Gupta/Patna

Bitter-sweet

Former state minister Shalinitai Patil's opponents try to thwart her attempts to set up a sugar factory

MAHARASHTRA

The taste of sugar is not always sweet and one person to have realised this is Shalinitai Patil, a former Maharashtra minister and wife of the late Vasantdada Patil, a former chief minister of the state. Patil has been trying to set up a sugar factory since 1981 in the state's cooperative sector, but her efforts have been repeatedly thwarted by the local sugar barons and the government's ever-changing industrial licensing policy. Finally, when she did succeed in getting her project cleared by the Centre in January this year, her opponents rushed to the Supreme Court and obtained a stay order against her project.

Patil had applied for an industrial licence under the Industrial Development Regulation Act to the Union ministry of food and agriculture for setting up the factory. At that time, the government's policy was against the setting up of new sugar factories in districts that already had three such mills. Satara district, in which Patil planned to set up her plant, already had more than three sugar factories and, as such, her application could not be considered.

The licensing policy was changed in 1986. The new policy prevented the establishment of a sugar factory within a 40-km radius of an existing mill. Patil, accordingly, filed a fresh application under the new guidelines, but it was at this stage that two men—Hanumantrao Mane and Issac Inamdar—said to be proxies of two powerful politicians, Pratap Rao Bhosale and Shankar Rao Jagtap, jumped into the fray. Patil, at that time, also had to face the wrath of her estranged husband, Vasantdada, who spared no effort in trying to frustrate her plan. In 1987 and the greater part of 1988, the state government sat over her application without sending it to Delhi for clearance.

Exasperated by the government's dilatory tactics, Patil filed a case in the Bombay High Court, seeking justice. On 1 October, 1988, the court directed Patil to send her application directly to the Centre. But Sharad Pawar, who became the chief minister towards the middle of



Shalinitai Patil: fighting a long battle

1988, informed Patil that the state government would not back her application as it was keen on sponsoring the one filed by Jagtap. She, therefore, filed another petition in the Bombay High Court, pleading for a quick settlement of the matter by the Union government. In response to her appeal, the court directed the Centre to settle the issue by March 1989.

Following the court's order, the Centre issued a letter of intent to Patil in January 1989, but the licensing policy was modified again in February. The latest guidelines reduced the 40-km sti-

pulation separating two sugar factories to 25 km. So the doughty sugar barons were back in the fray again as another factory could now be squeezed into Satara, if only Patil agreed to shift the location of her plant by a few kilometres. To force Patil into doing this, Hanumantrao Mane filed a petition in the Bombay High Court, alleging that Patil's application was not in order. Patil, who was in no mood to enter into litigation, decided to compromise by agreeing to set up her plant at Koregaon instead of Bombale, where it was originally planned.

Patil, who thought that she had ultimately crossed all the hurdles, could hardly imagine that a booby-trap lay ahead. Shanka Rao Jagtap's protegee, Issac Inamdar, suddenly emerged from the wilderness and came up with the plea in the High Court that his case should also be heard. The court, however, rejected his petition on the ground that it was filed too late. But Inamdar decided to take the battle to the Supreme Court which decided to hear the entire case afresh. So the case involving the three applicants—Patil, Mane and Inamdar—will now be heard in the Supreme Court on 8 August. Will Shalinitai get a verdict in her favour.

Olga Tellis/Bombay

Property matters

The Lokayukta of Madhya Pradesh peeves state bureaucrats by asking them to declare their assets

The actions of certain IAS (Indian Administrative Service) and IPS (Indian Police Service) officials have dismayed a former judge; their actions have also made him adamant. A battle royal has started between Justice P.K. Tare, a former Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court and the present Lokayukta, and the top brass of the state's bureaucracy after Justice Tare issued a directive, asking all IAS and IPS officers to submit to him up-to-date details of their properties and assets acquired while on government service.

The bureaucracy took umbrage at this circular and said that the Lokayukta had no right to seek such information. According to the state's IAS and IPS officers' associations, Justice Tare should have sought information regarding specific cases and not issued a blanket order. The state officials have decided not

to comply with the Lokayukta's directive because they feel that it tried to suggest that the entire bureaucracy in the state was corrupt.

What prompted Justice Tare's action was probably the refusal of some officials to cooperate with him in a probe he was conducting into alleged irregularities in certain promotions in

A minister in the Vora ministry says that the lifestyle of several senior officials living in Bhopal and other cities is glaringly disproportionate to their income

Infamous monument

The residents of Dhenkanal prevent the demolition of a building associated with feudal tyranny

ORISSA

The dilapidated mansion of Jatan Nagar casts a shadow of guilt on the royal family of Dhenkanal. It would like to demolish the two-storied, 92-roomed building perched atop a hill overlooking Dhenkanal town and forget all that was associated with it as a bad dream. But the local people are in no mood to let bygones be bygones; they are determined to preserve the ruins as one of the worst relics of feudal oppression. And caught in this battle of emotions is K.P. Singh Deo, MP and former Union minister, who is also a prominent scion of the royal family.

Said Charan Patnaik, 75, a former MP and a vocal critic of the Singh Deos "Jatan Nagar is being demolished to erase from public mind the memories of

the tyranny the royal family had let loose on the people during the rule of K.P. Singh Deo's father, S.K. Singh Deo." Though the building originally belonged to K.P. Singh Deo's uncle, Nrusingha Pratap Singh Deo, Patnaik said that the

hours of hard labour as did elephants and camels that were employed to carry tonnes of building material up steep hill slopes. And the money for the construction of the palatial building was forceably collected from the people of 1,100 villages that comprised the princely state.

Jatan Nagar, named after Nrusingha



(Above) The building at Jatan Nagar; a partly demolished portion of the building: inglorious past

the state police. Justice Tare had asked for the files relating to the matter, but the promotion committee—which comprised top bureaucrats—refused to oblige.

Justice Tare stressed the fact that he has the right to seek information from any person he feels necessary irrespective of the person's rank. The stand of chief minister Motilal Vora on the issue is not yet clear, but in 1985 he had advised all non-officials holding the posts of chairman and deputy chairman in government undertakings, boards, or corporations to submit the details of their assets to the Lokayukta.

The exact reason why the bureaucrats are withholding the information Justice Tare has sought is not known for certain, but one minister said that the life-style of several senior officials living in Bhopal and other cities was glaringly disproportionate to their official income. He even complained that many of them were occupying government bungalows while renting out their own flats or houses. And Justice Tare, may have sighted the tip of an iceberg and is now determined to probe the rest.

M.V. Kher / Raipur

nephew was most active in trying to get the building demolished. This was because, as a testimony to his family's anti-people past, it was a source of constant embarrassment to him, who, as a Congress(I) leader, wanted to build up his image as a man of the masses.

The royal family's attempts to demolish the building prompted the local people to form the Jatan Nagar Suraksha committee, which organised a demonstration and halted the demolition operations, at least for the time being. The demonstrators, led by Patnaik, drove away the demolition squad and "occupied" the building. This led to considerable tension in the town, as some members of the demolition squad attacked the houses of the agitators. The members of the Suraksha Committee then marched in procession to the District Collector's office in protest against the violence, following which one person was arrested.

Jatan Nagar is popularly referred to as "jaatana nagar" (city of woe). Thousands of people in the erstwhile princely state of Dhenkanal were subjected to *bethi* (forced, unpaid labour) from 1932 to 1936 to build this palace. Many people are said to have died because of long



Pratap Singh Deo's wife, Jatan Kumari, was a self-contained complex spread over 20 acres. It had two tennis courts on the building's terrace and there were lakes at the foot of the hill for water sports.

The Jatan Nagar Suraksha Committee wants the government to declare the building a national property to be preserved as a reminder of feudal oppression.

Sarada P. Nanda/ Dhenkanal

TYRES

On a rough track

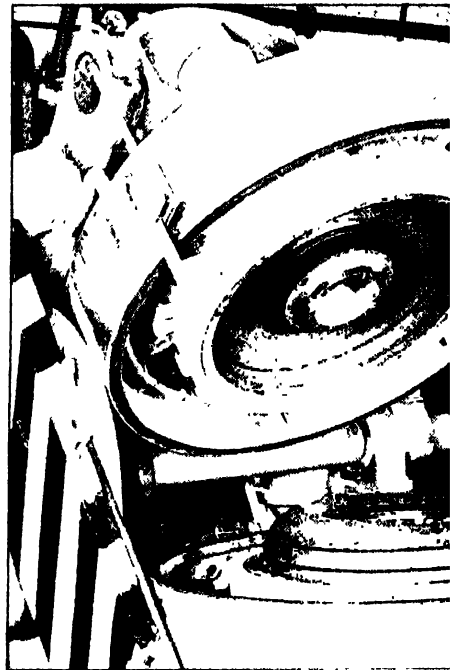
While manufacturers claim to be affected by escalating raw material prices, the government hits back by delicensing the industry

Tyres may be getting "unmatched road grip", becoming "dependable", even acquiring "muscle", conquering "heat temperature traction" and attaining "molecular stability". But at the same time, tyre manufacturers fear that their Rs 2,800-crore industry is being pushed to a screeching halt. As R.N.R. Gandhi, vice-president, marketing, Ceat Tyres, puts it, the industry is at the crossroads. With production exceeding demand by almost 5 lakh tyres in the last two years, the industry has no other option but to go in for exports to overcome the glut. And finding no respite from the continuing escalation in raw material prices, manufacturers have been forced to pass on the burden to consumers, though keenly aware of the fact that there is a limit to this course of action.

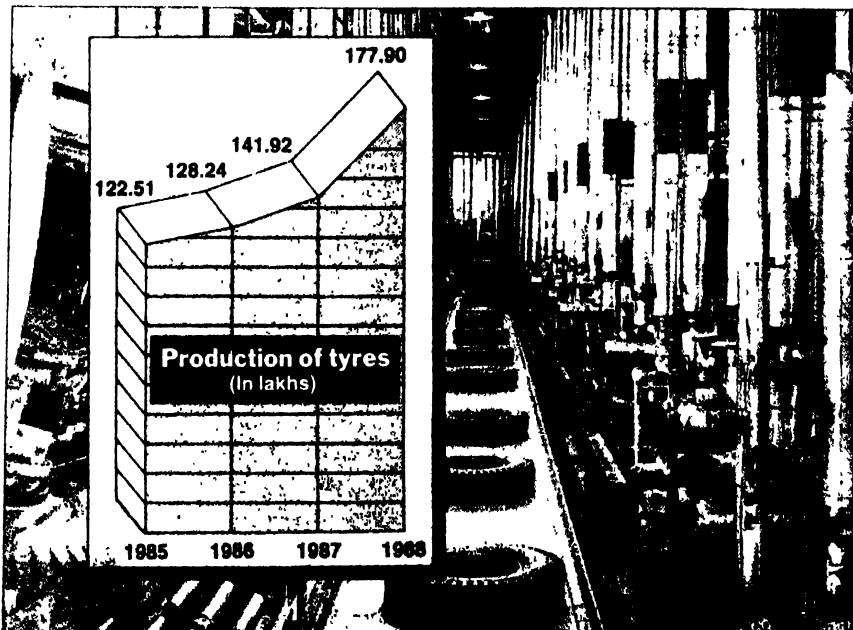
It is the tyre industry's grouse that its case is not appreciated. But then, the repeated price hikes by the tyre units, ostensibly to beat the burden of the raw material costs, has only led to a crisis of confidence between the government and tyre dealers on one side and the manu-

facturers on the other. Faced with allegations of cartel formation to effect price hikes, the government has for long wanted to discipline tyre manufacturers. Between February 1984 and October 1988, manufacturers jacked up tyre prices five times. Repeated warnings to the industry to refrain from such frequent price hikes through cartels failed to have the desired effect. But the October 1988 hike obviously came as the last straw and invited the government's wrath. Not only was the import of truck and bus tyres put under Open General Licence (OGL), but the entire tyre and tube industry was delicensed. With the state transport corporations, which account for 10 to 12 per cent of the total tyre softtake, deciding to take advantage of OGL imports to the extent of 30,000 tyres in the first phase, the manufacturers have enough cause for concern. As a government official put it, a solution has finally been found to teach the manufacturers a lesson.

However, Gandhi says that "such a situation only muddies the water". He argues that tyre manufacturing is a raw



Inside a tyre factory: using advanced technology

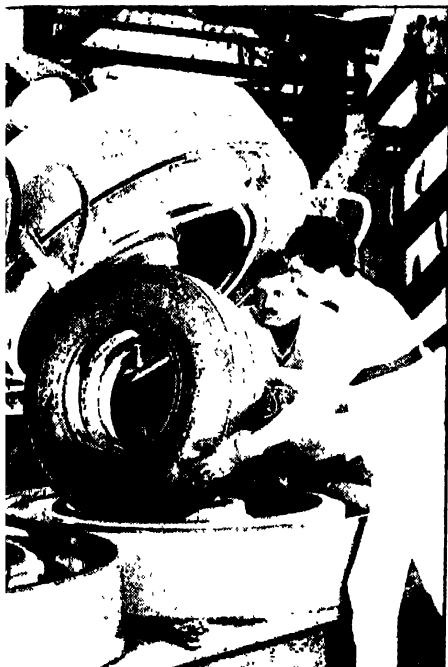


material intensive industry, and tyre prices were hiked in keeping with the escalation in raw material prices. Between October 1988 and June this year, for instance, he says, the total increase in raw material costs has imposed a financial burden of Rs 143.30 crores which is almost 5 per cent of the industry's turnover. Another industry spokesman pointed out that nylon tyre cord prices increased by 13.74 per cent, natural rubber (indigenous) by 14.62 per cent, imported natural rubber by 34.29 per cent, carbon black by 3.5 per cent, bead wire by 12.25 per cent, and zinc oxide by 10.63 per cent.

The industry is currently trying to fight the government on the import issue as it feels that the terms of import are heavily loaded in favour of foreign manufacturers. Imports are permitted a preferential rate of customs duty which has been reduced from 145 per cent to 105 per cent. Tyre manufacturers, on the other hand, have to pay customs duty on raw materials ranging from 100 per cent

to 180 per cent. Since these constitute 15 to 18 per cent of their total raw material requirements, the impact on production costs is substantial, they argue.

Says Gandhi, "We were in the midst of trying to get the government to see this glaring discrimination, when a fresh crisis has confronted us in the form of an increase in duty on imported natural rubber." The import of natural rubber is canalised through the State Trading Corporation (STC) which



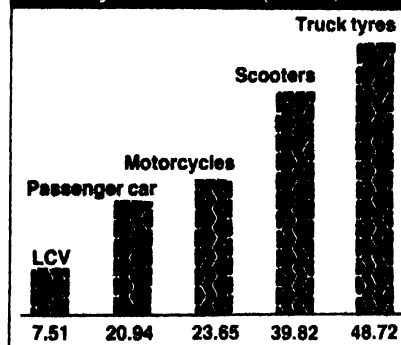
changes the duty structure with each consignment. On 11 July, the government increased the import duty from 25 per cent to 40 per cent as a result of which STC has jacked up the price of natural rubber, by Rs 3,600, to Rs 27,400 per tonne.

According to H.H. Nagrecha, secretary general of the All-India Rubber Industries Association, the price of domestic natural rubber will go up further to reach the level of imported rubber. While the 4,400 small rubber goods manufacturers are in a quandary over this "irrational increase" as they term it, the tyre manufacturers see this as "a grim situation". It will mean an additional burden of Rs 100 crores on the manufacturers, says Gandhi. Though imported rubber forms only 25 per cent of the industry's total needs, it is sensitive because it represents the gap between demand and supply of natural rubber.

But despite the problem of raw material prices, the 15 major players in the tyre market find themselves in a highly

The repeated price hikes by the tyre units have only led to a crisis of confidence between the government and tyre dealers on one side and the manufacturers on the other

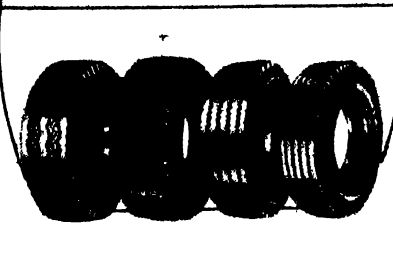
Segmentwise production of tyres in 1988 (In lakhs)



competitive situation. One reason is the changing profile of the industry's customer. But what will churn up the market is the delicensing of the industry.

Industry's turnover (Rs crore)

1987-88	2200
1988-89	2800

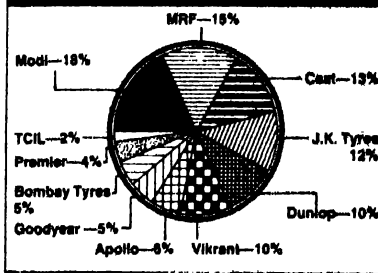


CHARTS BY NILRATAN MAITY

Under the new policy, manufacturers will be able to expand their capacities without having to wait for a licence. At the same time, new parties would not need

to go through the licensing procedures to set up shop. The fear of competition has now sent the heavyweights of the industry scurrying for newer technology: radial tyres. If conventional tyres hogged the market, it was only because the industry had all along argued that radials were not suited for Indian roads. But no more. The Karnataka State Transport Undertaking, which experimented with radial tyres made by the public sector Vikrant Tyres, found that against a life of 40,000 km for the conventional tyres, the radial tyres gave a mileage of a stupendous 80,000 km. Even the cost per km was found to have come down by almost 40 per cent. Vikrant has now tied up with Avon Tyres of the UK to set up a Rs 200-crore plant to manufacture radial tyres.

Market share of leading tyre manufacturers



Unfazed by the current crisis, Apollo Tyres is setting up a Rs 143.87-crore plant in Baroda in technical collaboration with General Tire Inc. of the USA. Commercial production at the new plant is expected to start by 1991 and will have an installed capacity of 6.75 lakh tyres annually. Apollo thinks it is in for good times because the demand in the next five years is expected to go up to 52.86 lakh truck tyres and 4.65 lakh tractor tyres. Seventy-four per cent of Apollo's production consists of truck tyres and 11 per cent tractor tyres. The name of the game, says an Apollo spokesman, is "segmentation". Says he, "We segmented the market and found that in the east and north the preference is for heavy rear wheel tyres and 15 per cent of this market is ours."

For the tyre industry, the tracks of the future will be treaded by radials, even if segmentation is the name of the game. And the tyre heavyweights have already made a start in this direction.

Olga Tellis/Bombay

HOUSING

Making a dream come true

Individual home finance loans get a big thrust with innovative schemes from commercial banks

"You can own a home and not feel the burden."

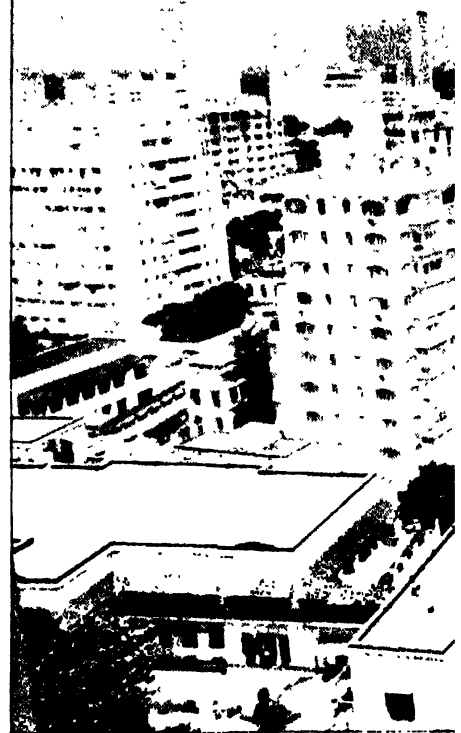
"Your very own home. It's a dream that you have nurtured for years. A dream for which you've been saving whatever money you can month after month."

Going by the recent spate of advertisements, the common man's dream of having a house of his own is perhaps within reach now. And he need not stash away his small savings, wishfully hoping that he would have enough

to venture into the housing market. And, of course, the competition will ensure quality products and a better service to the customer."

The foray into home finance by the new entrants has been marked by innovative schemes. For instance, in 1987, Vysya Bank tested the waters with a double-benefit scheme: a loan-linked-deposit scheme for housing and vehicle purchase. But it was clear that the housing loan generated far greater interest than the car purchase loan. "Eighty per cent depositors under the scheme were looking for housing loans," says Sridhar Subasri, assistant general manager of Vysya Bank's industrial credit department. Now, HB's new scheme to promote housing is attracting Vysya Bank customers in a bigger way. Says Subasri, "We were the first bank to advertise the home scheme. We do not see the new scheme as a facility but as a service."

Under the NHB scheme, an individual not owing a house anywhere in the country can open an account in any branch of a bank. The depositor can save from a minimum of Rs 30 per month upwards over a period of five years in quarterly, half-yearly and annual instalments. The savings will fetch the standard interest of 10 per cent which will be



Multistoried apartments : a house of your own

added to the account and treated as reinvested. On maturity the account holder is eligible for a loan which will be a multiple of two to four times the accumulated savings and upto a maximum of Rs 3 lakhs. Says Subasri, "To those who save an average of Rs 1,000 a month, the banks offer a range of incentives that include bridge loans, free membership to credit card facility and technical counselling. The bridge loan facility allows depositors to draw loans to buy a house even before the account has matured."

If the floodgates of housing finance had not opened earlier, it was because of the Reserve Bank of India's conservative policies. RBI guidelines had earlier stipulated that housing finance should not normally exceed 50 per cent of the total cost. Besides the steep interest of 12 per cent, loans had to be repaid within 7 years, and in no case would be allowed to exceed 10 years. Moreover, a limit was strictly enforced on the total quantum of housing loans that banks collectively can dole out annually. Till 1982 it was a paltry Rs 75 crores which was progressively raised to Rs 300 crores last year. As a result of the stringent conditions, banks disbursed only Rs 144 crores in 1985, Rs 183 crores in 1986 and Rs 192 crores in 1987.

Last year, however, the RBI, in a

Home Loan Account Scheme

What is the Home Loan Account Scheme?

The Home Loan Account Scheme (HLAS) is a new initiative by the National Housing Bank (NHB) to help individuals who want to own a house. It allows you to open a savings account with a minimum deposit of Rs 30 per month. The savings will earn interest at 10% per annum. After five years, you can use the accumulated savings to take a loan for buying a house. The loan amount will be up to four times the accumulated savings, but not more than Rs 3 lakhs.

Who can open an account?

Any individual who is not owning a house anywhere in the country can open an account in any branch of a bank. The depositor can save from a minimum of Rs 30 per month upwards over a period of five years in quarterly, half-yearly and annual instalments.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of the scheme include: a range of incentives that include bridge loans, free membership to credit card facility and technical counselling. The bridge loan facility allows depositors to draw loans to buy a house even before the account has matured.

National Housing Bank

Head Office: 10, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110028

Regional Offices: Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Lucknow, Jaipur, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Coimbatore, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram, Dispur, Shillong, Aizawl, Imphal, Agartala, Itanagar, Port Blair, Karaikal, Pondicherry, Daman, Diu, Lakshadweep.

one day to achieve his cherished dream. Facilities for housing finance—a hitherto neglected sector—have finally been given a belated thrust. While several commercial banks have launched housing finance subsidiaries in the last 12 months, on 1 July this year, the National Housing Bank (NHB), a refinance institution for housing finance, began operations. And if the encouraging response is anything to go by, the message in the series of ads has reached home.

Can Fin Homes Ltd, the year-old subsidiary of Canara Bank, is one of the first to venture into the new avenue of home finance. Promoted jointly with the Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC), Can Fin expects to disburse Rs 1,500 crores and open 40 branches by 1992. Also in the fray are Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India and Vysya Bank. Says Satish Mehta, chief of operations, HDFC, India's leading housing finance agency, "We welcome new entrants to this sector and will encourage a larger number of people

Bank disbursements for housing

Year	Rs crore
1985	144
1986	183
1987	192



CHART BY SANTOSH DUTTA



ASHOK CHARRABORTI

Introducing Vysya Bank's
FIRST HOME SCHEME
Housing Loan Against Scheme of the National Housing Bank



Just 1826 days to your own home with Vysya Bank

change of heart, raised the disbursement limit to Rs 300 crores and liberalised the terms for housing finance. The interest rate now ranges between 12.5 to 16 per cent and the repayment period has been extended to 15 years. At the same time, RBI even permitted commercial banks to set up subsidiaries to function as specialised financing institutions. Says HDFC's Mehta, "Though still very small, the performance of these subsidiaries will be crucial for the development of housing finance in the country."

Ironically, home finance is not the main line of business of the country's largest housing financier—the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). Over 70 per cent of the country's institutional housing finance is made available by the funds-flush LIC, a large chunk going to the government-owned Housing and

Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO). Says Brijit Singh, chief (legal) of LIC, "LIC has been giving loans to state governments and apex cooperative societies ever since its inception in 1956. Cumulatively, we have contributed over Rs 2,500 crores to the housing sector and funded the construction of more than 22 lakh dwelling units." But it is only recently that LIC's individual loan scheme has taken off impressively. Says P.R. Singh of LIC's new subsidiary, LIC Housing Finance Company, "In 1987 we simplified our loan procedure and gave the own your-own-home-scheme a much-needed

The common man's dream of having his own house is perhaps within reach now. And he need not stash away all his savings hoping to see the realisation of his dreams

marketing thrust. Prior to 1987, our total disbursements were about Rs 22 crores on about 2,000 loans a year. In 1987, loans sanctioned doubled to 4,500 schemes with aggregate disbursements of Rs 33 crores. And in 1988-89, we sanctioned Rs 122 crores for 15,500 individual loans." In September this year, the LIC Housing Finance Co.—set up with equity participation from other financial institutions like the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI), Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI) and Unit Trust of India (UTI) proposes to launch a "own-your-own-apartment scheme".

While the new institutions are finding their feet, HDFC, hitherto the only agency catering to individual housing

HPFC
HOUSING PROMOTION AND FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED

Housing Loans For Individuals

You can own a HOME and not feel the burden.



finance, has maintained steady growth. Promoted in 1977, HDFC operates 20 branches throughout the country and boasts of cumulative sanctions of Rs 1,500 crores and cumulative disbursements of Rs 1,000 crores. The typical HDFC borrower is an individual aged 33 years, with a monthly income of Rs 2,500, and the demand is normally for Rs 50,000-60,000, say HDFC personnel. But HDFC is aware of the high cost of borrowing on its loans—interest rates varying from 13.5 per cent to 15 per cent and it is looking for ways to extend its services to a broader spectrum of beneficiaries. "For instance," says Mehta, "under the telescopic loan plan (TLP), young households with initially low incomes can obtain loans which are subsequently adjusted in line with their increasing repayment capacity."

The message then is "greater reach and enhanced innovation" and to broaden its activities HDFC has tied up with commercial banks. The Housing Promotion and Finance Corporation (HPFC), promoted jointly with the State Bank, will concentrate in the east and north-east, while Can Fin Homes, floated with Canara Bank, will operate

mainly in the south. Observes B.N. Salar, managing director of the Calcutta-based HPFC which opened its doors in March this year, "The need for specialised housing finance institutions for specific geographical locations was recognised a long time ago." He adds, "According to a recent estimate, there is a shortage of 53 million dwelling units in the country, of which the eastern and north-eastern regions alone account for 45 per cent. Our first task is to help build dwelling units for the middle class. We will discourage luxury houses and will not finance builders whose target is the high-income groups."

For its target group, HPFC is offering individual loans ranging from Rs 7,000 to Rs 2.5 lakhs repayable in monthly instalments within 5 to 20 years, depending

on the amount involved. However, the rate of interest of 12.5 per cent to 14.5 per cent is still on the higher side.

The high cost of borrowing notwithstanding, the recent spurt in activity in shelter sector financing has certainly created a new awareness: that the purchase or construction of a house through individual savings need not be taken up only after retirement. At the same time, a broader spectrum of beneficiaries can avail themselves of the many-splendoured finance schemes only if the government encourages mortgage societies to reduce the cost of borrowing. Otherwise, despite the alluring ads, "own-your-own-home" will still remain a pipedream for many.

Debjani Sinha/Bombay and Calcutta and Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

MRF

Looking beyond tyres

The tyre giant gears up for wide-ranging diversification

With competition being the new buzzword of Indian industry, companies are wary of remaining single-product entities. Survival of the fittest is the new credo, and corporate fitness comes from having several lines of activity to counterbalance a bad year in one line with profits in others. Even the redoubtable Dhirubhai Ambani realised the need for diverse interests, as is evident from his take-over of Larsen and Toubro and the setting up of Reliance Petrochemicals. Madras-based fertiliser giant, SPIC, too, is gradually moving into petrochemicals, electronics, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and is even contemplating to make an entry into the field of specialised engineering products.

Now it is the turn of MRF Limited, the Madras based tyre company with the largest advertising exposure, which is gearing up for a massive diversification programme. The company is modifying its memorandum of association to acquire the legal base to diversify. Two special resolutions will be adopted at the company's annual general meeting this month to enable MRF to enter into eight new lines of manufacturing activity ranging from leather goods, agro and marine products to toys and educational aids. The tyre giant also proposes to get into trading activity in a big way. A sub-clause which is being introduced in the

memorandum of association widens the objects clause thus: "To carry on business as importers and exporters of all types of goods, products and services and also to act as general merchants and agents and to carry on any activity in connection therewith."

Many of these activities, however, are not new lines of business for the chairman of the company, K.M. Mammen Mappillai, and his sons, Vinoo Mammen and Ravi Mammen. The Mammen family has diverse plantation interests, especially rubber, in Kerala and are thus familiar with agro-based products. (Another branch of the family

owns the Kerala-based Malayala Manorama group of newspapers.)

MRF already has a subsidiary, Funschool (India) Limited, which makes toys and educational aids. The toys are sleek and fairly expensive and are mainly aimed at children of affluent families who have been brought up on He-man, Superman and other comic heroes. Funschool began commercial operations in May 1988, but as the directors mention in the annual report, "activities started accelerating only from the beginning of December 1988". By the end of 31 March, 1989, Funschool had totted up losses of about Rs 1.13 crores but, as the annual report specifies, it was because of the "inevitable initial expenditure to build up necessary product image and consumer awareness".

The losses notwithstanding, MRF has done very well in the 18 months ending 31 March, 1989. The turnover rose sharply to Rs 742.47 crores against Rs 307.70 crores in the previous accounting year. The profit before tax jumped to Rs 39.67 crores from Rs 15.66 crores and the profit after tax has shown an equally impressive leap to Rs 25.02 crores from Rs 10.09 crores.

The latest annual report says that production in April and May 1989 totalled Rs 86 crores, while sales amounted to Rs 79 crores. Both figures are expected to keep increasing in view of the expansion and modernisation programmes which have been completed over 18 months.



Ravi Mammen: branching out

Still, the directors are choosing to play safe. The annual report of the company, explains this cautious stance. It says: "However, steep increases in prices of raw materials like rubber, nylon, rubber chemicals etc., will have a substantial impact on the company's profitability." Even if your tyre has muscle, it is a safe bet not to keep all your eggs in one basket.

R. Vijayaraghavan/Madras

**MRF is gearing up for
a massive**

diversification

programme. The

company is poised to

enter into eight new

lines of manufacturing

activity

TRENDS

Work well, go abroad

Many companies are offering 'incentive trips' to their employees

Work hard if you want to go abroad. This is the message many a leading Indian company is now whispering into the ears of its employees, particularly those in sales promotion or in supervisory categories. A large number of top level companies in India are now offering "incentive trips" to their employees to destinations like Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore as reward for good work. And travel agents have sprung up, particularly in Bombay and New Delhi, to handle such trips.

Leading Western multinationals have for long been offering "incentive trips" to their employees. The packages have varied in content and facilities. While some have offered trips to nearby destinations or to exotic places, others have come up with sporting binges (the Japanese companies, for instance, are providing golfing trips to their executives. The multinationals arrange trips for single employees as well as vacations for families depending on the seniority level of the employees and the kind of service they have given to their companies. Some have even introduced incentive travel accounts which can be accumulated over the years for a long and distant trip.

Indian incentive offers are not of the same scale yet. They mostly include short trips for single employees to South-East Asian countries. Modi Xerox, Hero Honda, Western Electronics, Peico (Philips) and the Usha-Shriram group have already sent several incentive trips to South-East Asia in the last two years. Companies dealing in consumer durables have particularly gone in for the incentive travel bait with some of them even extending these facilities to their dealers.

The primary reason for sending employees and dealers to holidays abroad is the relative cost of such trips within the country. For instance, a round air ticket from Calcutta to Srinagar via Delhi costs Rs 4,750. Against this, a regular two-way ticket from Calcutta to Singapore via Bangkok is priced at Rs 5,225. Given the psychological satisfaction an employee or dealer would derive from a foreign trip, a marginally higher cost of a round ticket is small price, and com-

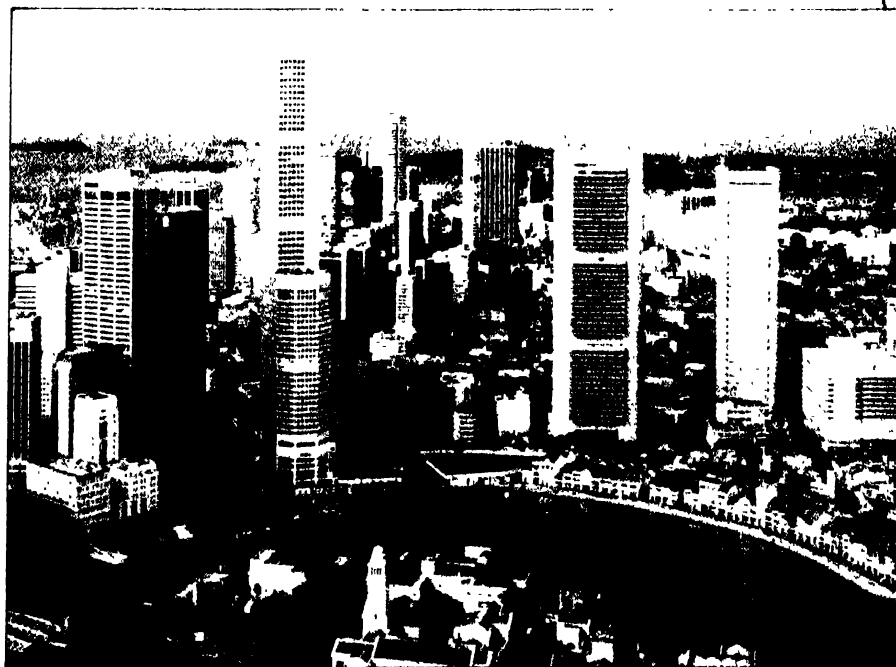
panies are prepared to pay it. And for group travels the fares could even be negotiated and discounts are often available for certain off-peak flights.

For the rest, the foreign exchange allowances under the foreign travel (FT) scheme are adequate. Hotel rooms are available in Singapore, Bangkok and Kuala

Lumpur for prices ranging between \$20 and \$35 per day for double rooms with the prices falling slightly if these are occupied for more than one day. Even Air-India, which is not in a position to offer discounted rates, has officially offered double hotel rooms at \$32 for the first night and \$20 for every additional night. The prices include transportation from airport to hotel and breakfast. The low prices have attracted the attention of tour operators who have organised trips for school children. In the past two years, a majority of them have made trips to South-East Asian countries.

With the spurt in traffic on the routes between India and the three South-East Asian cities (Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore), several airlines are in-

A view of Singapore, tourist paradise



A large number of top level Indian companies are offering "incentive trips" to their employees to destinations like Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore

creasing their capacities and services. Air-India, for instance, will shortly be introducing stop-over tours to Singapore. The regional airlines of these countries have also evinced interest in offering higher capacity. In order to attract tourists from Europe and the Middle-East, Air-India is lumping its South-East Asian tours with trips within India on either the onward or return leg of the journey, and, the takers of the package even enjoy the option of an India stop-over at \$27 per day.

Wait for your turn for an "incentive trip" from your company if you have not already made one. It should come, for the Indian corporate sector is fast catching on to this "imported technology".

Anjan Roy/New Delhi

New look for Ambassador

The automobile policy may be stillborn, but the automakers are doing their best to make the most of the situation. Hindustan Motors has decided to finally revamp the old faithful of the Indian roads, the doughty Ambassador. The familiar saloon model will, in phases, be transformed into an aerodynamic model in keeping with the consumers' changing preferences. The first steps have



Going for a facelift

already been taken: the new fuel-efficient petrol and diesel engines with technology from Ricardo of the UK will be put into the Ambassador cars from next year, after which the new body design will be taken up. In a way HM had no other option for its sheer survival, what with the 1000 cc three-box Maruti slated to hit the mar-

ket in about a year's time. It will be an interesting competition given that the revamped Ambassador will be cheaper than the Maruti model.

Jagatjit bags KGF

It was a keen take-over battle all along-- but one that was fought quietly. The race began late last year when the news got around that the Kothari General Foods (KGF) was in bad shape. Instant beverages and processed foods being an up-coming industry, it was always a plum picking. Among the first to line up were the Modis and, of course, take-over tycoon R.P. Goenka. The Modis, however, had an edge over the others, considering that one of their companies, Godfrey Phillips, had ties with Phillip Morris, the parent company of General Foods, the US food giant, which has a 33 per cent stake in KGF. It was not long before Jagatjit Industries and Indodan Industries also entered the fray. The tussle has finally come

A General Foods ad: new partner

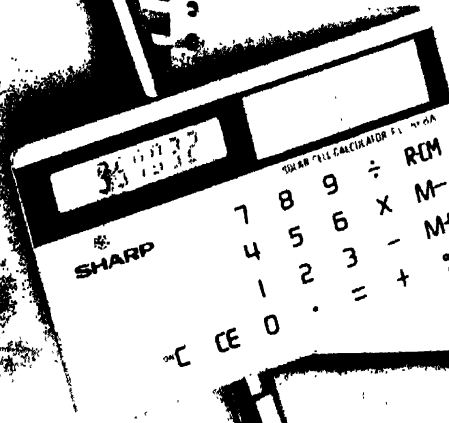


to an end with General Foods opting to take on Jagatjit Industries--the makers of 'Viva' and 'Maltova'--as its new partner.

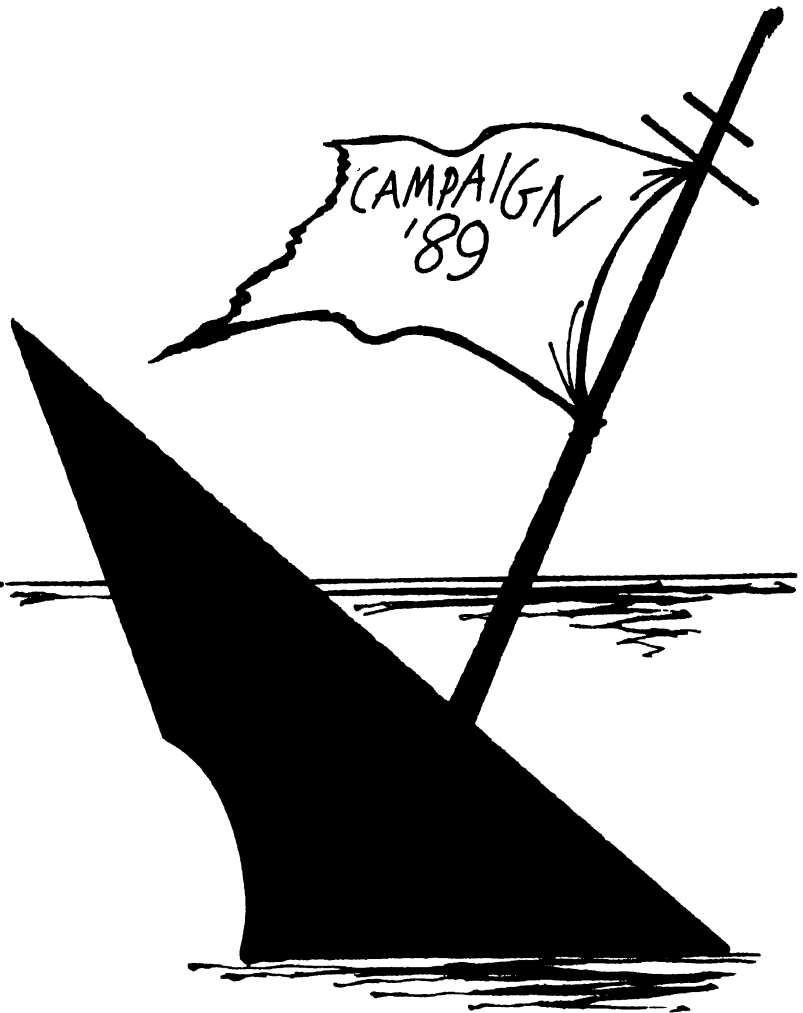
'Humpty-Tumpty' hits back

Remember the Humpty Tumpty ad? The bitter circulation war between the capital's two leading dailies is far from over. *The Times of India*, in a determined bid to be the number one newspaper in the capital, ridiculed the market leader, *Hindustan Times*, and released the contentious ad some months ago proclaiming "Humpty Tumpty has a fall". The ad shocked the traditionalists as well as the Press Council, and the new-found marketing aggression of *The Times* was quickly put under check. HT could only lick its wounds till it could hit back. And the opportunity came a fortnight ago with the release of the National Readership Survey of the Operations Research Group. Triumphant, HT prominently covered the details in the very next morning's edition on the front page. Under the heading, "75 per cent of Delhi reads HT", the newspaper declared that its readership was more than double that of *The Times*: 7.78 lakhs against 3 lakhs.

With that, the second round of the circulation battle was on in earnest. *The Times* hit back-- of course with a front-page display-- that the group had a 35 per cent stranglehold on the Delhi readership.



I DENY
IT!
WHAT
SHIPWRECK?



RAVI SHANKAR

Will the government be allowed to reduce the country's television network to a propaganda machine of the ruling party? Not if some concerned viewers can help it. And not without a legal battle, anyway. Disturbed by what they consider "manipulation of broadcasting media", concerned citizens have moved the Supreme Court, challenging the government's monopoly over the electronic media, that is, All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan.

Last fortnight a division bench comprising Justice Ranganath Mishra and Justice Kuldeep Singh, of the Supreme Court, admitted a writ petition filed by the Delhi-based public interest organisation Common Cause, and also issued notice to the government, on an application, restraining it from "denigrating" the ruling party's opponents and indulging in a "biased coverage of political developments". Admitting the petition, Justice Singh observed that the official media belonged to everybody. "Let the government come and explain," he said.

The counsel for Common Cause, Soli Sorabjee, held that the functioning of AIR and Doordarshan as "subordinate departments of the Government of India" violated the fundamental right of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. "Freedom of expression would be meaningless without freedom to listen and receive uncensored information," he said.

The petition challenges the government monopoly of the electronic media under Section 4 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1985. Under this act, no licence is granted to any other person (besides the central government) to have a radio transmitter, or to run a television service, even though the proviso to Section

A case in point

A writ petition filed in the Supreme Court to protest the government's media management



4 permits the Union government to grant a licence to any person for this purpose. The petitioners submitted that the grant of exclusive rights to the central government would be tantamount to the creation of a monopoly which is not permissible under Article 19(2) of the Constitution. The people have the right to impart and receive information, views, ideas and opinions of every description, including those which are unfavourable to and critical of the government. "Indeed it would be a barren marketplace of ideas which has only sellers and no buyers," the petitioners maintained.

The 30-page petition, filed by advocate Mukul Mudgal, highlighted the fact that in the present dispensation, there is no precise law or code with statutory force which makes it obligatory for the central government to maintain a proper balance in the dissemination of news and views, with sufficient allotment of time to different persons and political parties. The grounds for refusal of access and other matters are not specified, either. "In actual practice, the functioning of AIR and Doordarshan is discriminatory, arbitrary, unfair and clearly violative of Article 14 of the Constitution," the petitioners submitted.

The petitioners cited a precedent, to prove their point. The judgement of the Bombay High Court, ruling that the deletion of certain statements from lawyer Indira Jaising's broadcast on the Muslim Women's Bill, was illegal. (The government did not appeal against the

decision.) According to Jaising, she was waiting to be invited on Doordarshan again, to express her views on women's rights in full—a privilege granted to her as 'relief' in the judgement.

The Common Cause petition relied on Rajiv Gandhi's own admission to *The Telegraph* (12 March, 1986) that he is "projected too much" on television.

"Despite this," the petition says, "Doordarshan has continued its image-building exercise and is encouraging the personality cult." Newsworthiness is of no account: every action and utterance of the Prime Minister has to be televised. Complaints of the Opposition-ruled states, charging that Doordarshan has distorted events and statements in favour of the Congress(I) were also quoted.

The coverage of the imposition of President's Rule in Karnataka, for instance, "was totally one-sided, and during which unfounded and baseless allegations of horse-trading and immorality were made against the Bommai ministry". It was alleged that "irresponsible and slanderous allegations made by Subramaniam Swamy against his sworn political bete noire, Ramakrishna Hegde", were "given much prominence and allotted time which was far in excess of the time spared for the refutation of these allegations".

Other instances of biased reporting are cited, including the prominent display of a photograph of Opposition leader Ajit Singh with an alleged smuggler, while the photograph of the Prime

Minister with the same man (which appeared in the press) was not telecast.

Radio and television utilise the natural resources of the electro-magnetic spectrum, which is part of the public domain and in scarce supply. So, it is necessary to utilise it in the interests of the nation as a whole, and not for furthering the fortunes of any political party.

This policy is even more suspect now, with the general elections just round the corner. The action of the government, of "systematically feeding its people with misinformation, spreading false fears and alarms about the Opposition over a substantial period of time, militates against the essence and substance of guarantee of free and fair elections." The petitioners did not ignore the wide-

According to K.K. Tewari, 60 per cent of news time is devoted to the Opposition, with the Congress(I) only getting 40 per cent. The Prime Minister, he quickly adds, comes under a different category

spread criticism of the functioning of AIR and Doordarshan, during the Janata days (1977-1979), either.

Besides the universal complaint that too much television time is devoted to projecting the Prime Minister, the government has also been accused of maintaining a covert system of censorship. According to the petitioners, this is done by maintaining an unofficial blacklist. Certain persons are not given access to the electronic media because of their anti-government views. As also by blacking out the statements of persons (wholly or in part), without their knowledge or consent.

The petition filed by Common Cause and its director, H.D. Shourie, is not the first such writ. In 1987, Romesh Thapar, editor of *Seminar*, petitioned the Supreme Court under Article 32. Since Thapar's death last year, his daughter, Malvika Singh, and son, Valmik Thapar, and his sister, historian Romila Thapar, have taken over as

petitioners.

Thapar's writ argues that AIR and Doordarshan fall within the definition of the state and are therefore responsible to the public. Broadcasting is the "right" of viewers and listeners, and cannot be used for promoting the interests of a particular political party, or political leader in power, which reduces the "entire nation into a captive audience" and denies "a vital aspect of their personal liberty". The petition quotes a debate on external publicity in 1948, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said that, AIR "should approximate as far as possible, the British model, that is, the BBC, a semi-autonomous corporation with government control".

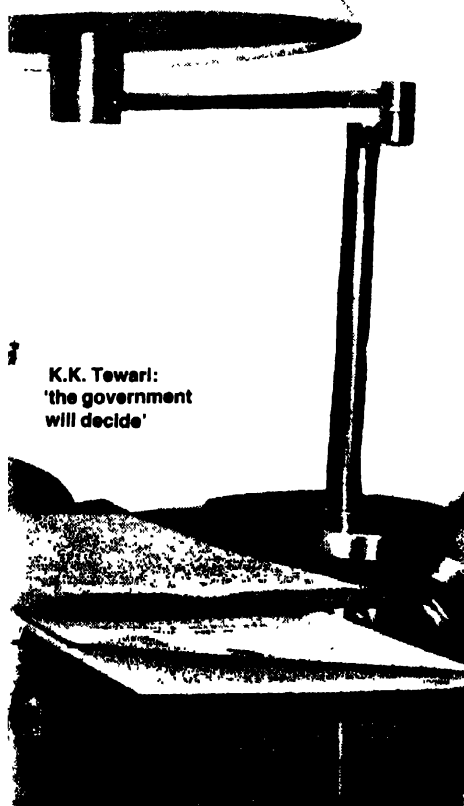
Doordarshan officials see these cases as mere "thorns in our sides". K. K. Tewari, minister of state for information and broadcasting, who has been accused of wielding Goebbelsian power, refuses to comment on the cases before the Supreme Court. But reiterates that, as long as his party is in power, it knows best what the people should see and hear. "We do not operate in a vacuum," he says, "With the limitations and the problems we have, we decide what is broadcast, broadly in the interests of the people at large."

Defends the minister to the charge that Doordarshan has been established by using Rs 800 crores of the taxpayers money: "If the people have sanctioned a system, it is for that system to manage their money for the five years that they are in power, at least."

Tewari, for his part, accuses the Janata government of gross misuse of the medium in the late Seventies, though at that time Doordarshan did not have a fraction of the reach it does today. "Advani, with his fascist prejudices tried to use Doordarshan as an instrument to promote his own brand of RSS philosophy, and ensured that all Muslims, except one girl, were driven out." About excessive coverage of the Prime Minister he says: "I stick to my guns," he says. "PM is PM, and he is news. Look at how much the press reports on him. About editing views and news, even the print media does it, there is limited space, and we have to be selective." According to him 60 per cent of news time is devoted to the Opposition and only 40 per cent to the Congress(I). The PM, he quickly adds, comes under a different category.

From Tewari's attitude it is clear that the government has no intentions of altering its media policy. Unless, of course, the law intervenes.

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi



K.K. Tewari:
'the government
will decide'

The last phase

In his last five years Jawaharlal Nehru faced trouble on many fronts which took a heavy toll on his health, writes Rafiq Zakaria

As Nehru entered the seventyfirst year of his life, he was more troubled than ever before both on domestic and external fronts; he was not happy with the increasing in-fighting within the Congress party and the growing corruption in the government. His daughter, Indira Gandhi, had been elected Congress president and the two had begun to differ on some vital issues, such as the bifurcation of the bilingual state of Bombay and the activities of the

communist government in Kerala. Finally he gave in to his daughter's demands: the communist government in Kerala was dismissed and President's Rule imposed; and the bilingual state of Bombay was bifurcated into two separate linguistic states—Maharashtra and Gujarat. The decisions were popular and he publicly justified them; but neither of these was to his liking. They had created a crisis of conscience within him with the result that Indira Gandhi refused to continue as the Congress president. She was too attached to her father to hurt him. He also lost a close confidant in the passing away of his home minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant.

The Opposition parties were also becoming more aggressive; for the first time in his parliamentary career he had to face a "no-confidence" motion against his government. Two of his best friends, the socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, and the Gandhian stalwart, Rajaji, were not only ranged against him but were becoming more and more critical of his policies. They openly attacked his style of functioning. Nehru complained to his sister, Vijaylaxmi Pandit:

"Our friend Jayaprakash Narayan says that I am a block on the road to socialism and should be removed if India is to progress. Rajaji says that the enemy number one is the Congress (he used to say that the enemy number one was communism previously) and he attacks me with a venom which is extraordinary. So, you will observe that I am having a fairly interesting time."

Nehru had been vacillating for a long time on the question of liberating Goa; he had hoped that the Portuguese could be brought round by means of American and British persuasion and that they would voluntarily vacate their occupation; but even Kennedy failed in his efforts. Also, public pressure in India had mounted; Pakistan too had begun to meddle in this affair. There was the brutal behaviour of Portugal towards its African possessions. Under these circumstances, Nehru allowed the Indian Army to march into Goa on 17-18 December, 1961. It occupied the territory within 24 hours with hardly any casualties. The event sent a wave of jubilation not only in India but also in Africa, where Portugal was regarded as a villain by the oppressed people.

Soon thereafter, Nehru had to face the third general election in February 1962; he went into it campaigning with the same vigour as before. He was conscious of the growing strength of the left-wing and the right-wing parties and,



therefore, took no chances, despite his advanced age. His election tours were hectic. He covered 16,362 miles by air, 13,000 miles by road and 130 miles by rail. He spoke at 91 public meetings and for 76 hours. And all this within about a month. The results were more than rewarding. In the Lok Sabha, his Congress party secured 361 out of 494 seats and 1,984 out of 3,297 seats in provincial Assemblies. The Opposition could not make a dent in Parliament, the leftists (communists) won 29 seats, and the two rightist parties, Jan Sangh, and Rajaji's newly-formed Swatantra Party 14 and 18 seats respectively. In some states they fared a little better. The socialists lost everywhere.

Nehru was also unhappy at the deterioration in the relations between the two super-powers, which was endangering world peace; he struggled hard to bring them together. He was distressed at the hostility that had begun to grow between them. He met Nasser and Tito at Belgrade in early September 1961, and the three pleaded for reconciliation between Russia and America. They deplored Russia's decision to resume nuclear testing. On reaching Moscow, Nehru urged Soviet Premier Krushchev that he and the US President, John F. Kennedy, should not lose any time to sort out their differences. Though the proposed meeting between these two leaders did not materialise, Nehru went to Washington and had long talks with Kennedy. They issued a joint communique on 9 November, 1961, which contained an assurance that America would seek a solution with Russia to the Berlin imbroglio, which was the burning issue. Then he addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations and once again called upon the two super-powers to take measures to lessen international tensions, in particular, not to resume nuclear testing.

On his way back, Nehru halted at Cairo and once again met his colleagues, Nasser and Tito, on 17 November, 1961, to give them an account of his meetings with Kennedy and other leaders. The three stressed the need for creating a climate of peace, which could be best achieved by general and complete disarmament and encouraging better economic co-operation between the developed and the developing countries.

On returning to India, Nehru was aghast to learn that the Chinese had amassed more than 50,000 troops on their side of the south Himalayan border. He had anticipated some such move, but not of this dimension. On 8 September, 1962, the Chinese troops had crossed the eastern sector; but they



(Clockwise from left) Nehru with Rajaji and with JP: friends turned adversaries; with Indira: differing perceptions

had not advanced further. Nehru ordered the army to push them back; the Chinese retaliated by a massive attack, occupying large Indian territories. On 25 October, 1962, Nehru admitted in Parliament:



Nehru was never able to understand the Chinese motive. The more Nehru pondered over it the more he was convinced that China was jealous of India's leadership of the non-aligned world

"Perhaps there are not many instances in history where one country, that is India, has gone out of her way to be friendly and co-operative with the Chinese government and people and to plead their cause in the councils of the world, and then for the Chinese government to return evil for good and even go to the extent of committing aggression and invade our sacred land."

The India-China confrontation came as a shock to the nation; the Congress parliamentary party demanded the resignation of defence minister Krishna Menon; Nehru tried to shield him but failed. Menon had to go. India's humiliation also came as a setback to the non-aligned movement, which looked to Nehru and Chou as its pillars. There was, therefore, hurried consultation for reconciliation between the two countries among non-aligned leaders. On 10 December, 1962, the heads of governments (or their repre-

sentatives) of Ceylon, Egypt, Indonesia, Cambodia and Ghana met at Colombo and suggested that India and China should withdraw their forces to the line of actual control as on 8 September, 1962. The proposals were accepted, in principle, by both the countries but China did not vacate the territories it had forcibly occupied. India insisted that without such vacation, talks would be meaningless; they would produce no satisfactory solution. Nehru was never able to understand the Chinese motive. Was the aggression because of the asylum he had given to the Dalai Lama? That would be too small a provocation for such a massive retaliation. He also could not fathom Chou's distrust of him. The Chinese Premier had concluded boundary treaties with Burma in October 1960, with Nepal in October 1961, with Pakistan in March 1963. Why not with India? Why this hostility? And that too despite all that India had done to help the communist regime internationally. The more Nehru pondered over it the more he was convinced that China was jealous of India's leadership of the non-aligned world and wanted to humiliate her. He explained:

"It is logical to conclude that China's multiple campaign against India is an exercise in *realpolitik* on those lines. India is such an outstanding member of the non-aligned community that her defection, whether voluntary or enforced, cannot fail to bring grave and far-reaching consequences in its train."

Did the Chinese aggression have an adverse effect on Nehru's health? Opinions differ. Some say that he had suffered a kidney ailment earlier; others, that the Chinese behaviour had come as a terrible blow to him.

Whatever it be, Nehru had lost some of his old vigour and zest. And still he worked as hard as before; he did not slow down the pace despite doctors' insistence. He had been wanting to give up his office for some time—much before the Chinese attack; on 29 April, 1958, he had publicly announced his intention:

"The work of a Prime Minister allows no respite, it is continuous and unceasing, much of it is routine, and much requires important decisions. There is little time for quiet thinking. I feel now that I must have a period when I can free myself and live as an individual citizen of India and not as Prime Minister."

He was, however, forced to continue; he renewed his plea this time. He had been distressed at the series of by-elections that the Congress had lost; the



Nehru with Nasser (centre) and Tito: search for world peace

entry into Parliament of J. B. Kripalani and R.M. Lohia—old comrades in the freedom struggle and now his bitterest critics—somewhat unnerved him. He felt that the Congress and the govern-

ment might fare better without him; no one in the Congress party, however, agreed with him. He remained their biggest vote-catcher. The situation had, no doubt worsened; but he alone could retrieve it and restore public confidence. Even those who were unhappy with his policies, did not want him to go; they only wanted to curb his powers. They advised him to take a holiday; but retirement was out of question.

However, the Congress, needed to be rejuvenated; the president, K. Kamaraj, was insistent on it. On 29 August, 1963, he, therefore, mooted the famous Kamaraj Plan under which twelve senior leaders, including Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri, who later became Prime Ministers, were made to quit the government. It was done to put "the party before the post" and to show to the people that the Congress had "no lust for power". "The plan was, however," observed Chalapathi Rao, Nehru's friend and the editor of his newspaper *National Herald*, "not backed by a prog-



Nehru faced the third general election in February 1962 with his usual vigour...His election tours were hectic. He covered 16,362 miles by air, 13,000 by road and 130 by rail. And all this within a month

ramme of action and Jawaharlal had no time to attend to organisational affairs. The plan gradually lost in momentum and by its final results it seemed to have been inspired by motiveless malignity."

As months passed, Nehru was getting more and more disillusioned; he was made to feel, in some quarters, that he had outlived his utility. There was talk about his successor; he was asked often to name one. He replied:

"This business of picking an individual successor is something I find quite alien to my way of thinking. I am not trying to start a dynasty. I am not capable of ruling from the grave. How terrible it would be if I, after all I have said about the processes of democratic government, were to attempt to handpick a successor. The best I can do for India is to help our people as a whole to generate new leadership as it may be needed."

It is, therefore, a fact that Nehru did not groom anyone as his successor; nor did he see the need for it.

At the Bhubaneswar session in January 1964 Jawaharlal suffered a stroke; it gave the first serious warning to the nation that his health had begun to fail. But he recovered fast; the doctors advised rest; he ignored it. From Moscow, Khrushchev invited him for a holiday in one of the famed Russian resorts; he declined. Kamaraj insisted that he should unburden himself of some of his onerous responsibilities; he resisted but then agreed to recall Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was axed under the Kamaraj Plan. He appointed him minister without portfolio.

He was, however, worried at the deteriorating situation in Kashmir; it had worsened ever since the theft of the strand of the Prophet's hair in January 1964 and, though the hair was recovered, it had shaken the faith of the Kashmiris in India's bonafides. Pakistan was trying as usual, to fish in troubled waters. Nehru liked Ayub but was distrustful of his motives. Consequently he had rejected Ayub's offer of a defence treaty. Nevertheless he desired to rebuild friendship and in a broadcast to the nation on 24 March, 1964 passionately pleaded for communal harmony and Indo-Pak accord. He chided those who talked of the communist menace; the greater danger lay in the rise of communal forces, particularly of the majority.

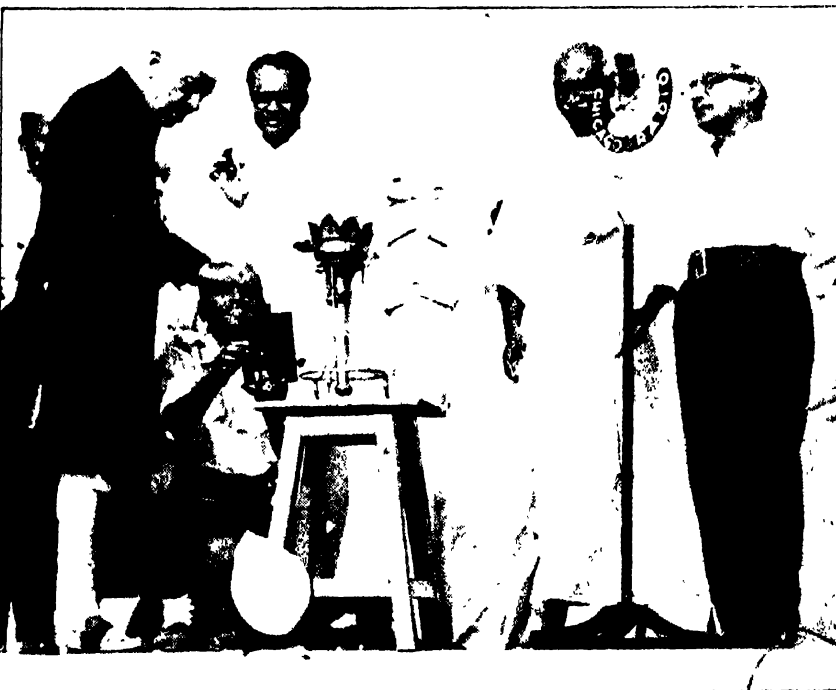
To ease the growing tension in Kashmir, Nehru released Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues, who had been detained in jail for eleven long years. The two long lost friends met on 30 April, 1964, and tried to find a lasting solution



Nehru with Sheikh Abdullah: growing tension in Kashmir



Nehru with army personnel during the China war: major setback



Kamaraj (second from right) and Nehru at the 1964 Bhubaneswar Congress session

to the Kashmir problem. The Sheikh had mellowed considerably; Nehru was also effusive towards him. Both were anxious to come to a settlement. Abdullah told Nehru that there could be no settlement without the concurrence of Pakistan; he had some proposals; these might provide a way out of the triangle. The Sheikh had, therefore, to go to Rawalpindi and talk to Ayub; Nehru raised no objection.

Nehru saw in better relations with Pakistan an opportunity to curtail the mounting defence expenditure and to direct funds for the welfare of the poor. The Chinese threat had proved costly; continued hostility between India

and Pakistan could be worse. Despite the three five-year plans the lot of the ordinary Indians had not much improved; this had disturbed him the most. The Third Plan was, therefore, made quite ambitious; it had a total investment of Rs 11,370 crores. But despite Nehru's hope, it failed to make an impact on the living conditions of the masses. Announced in 1960, by 1964 its results were not reassuring. The left blamed him for "a half-hearted approach", the right for taking away the "initiative and the incentive". Nehru could see that the economy was in a mess; he wished he could do something to put it on sound lines. He had been warned that the first requisite was population control; some-

how he was not prepared for this drastic step. Likewise, the Kamaraj Plan failed to enthuse the party. It produced no effect on the people. It created a power vacuum, which resulted in factional fighting and groupism within the Congress, which later proved a nuisance to his daughter when she took over the prime ministership. The clash between the groups finally split the Congress party.

Unknown to himself and to the nation, all this took a heavy toll of Nehru; the spirit was buoyant but the flesh had started to weaken. Indira took him to Dehra Dun on 23 May, 1964, for a three-day rest; he returned relaxed and cheerful. On 26 May, 1964, he ate a hearty meal at night, cracked a few jokes with his daughter, insisted on disposing of the files and worked till midnight. Then he retired, woke up once or twice, read a little, but in the early hours of 27 May, 1964, he suffered a massive heart

then I should like them to say: This was the man who, with all his mind and heart, loved India and the Indian people. And they, in turn, were indulgent to him and gave him of their love most abundantly and extravagantly."

Jawaharlal Nehru, while in power, it must be conceded, could not implement many of his ideas which he so passionately advocated when fighting against the British during our freedom struggle. He himself admitted: "Some years earlier I would not have been so hesitant. There was a definiteness about my thinking and objectives then, which has faded away since and events of the past few years in India, China, Europe and all over the world have been confusing, upsetting and distressing and the future has become vague and shadowy and has lost their clearness of outline

which it once possessed in my mind."

Though power made him circumspect and cautious, on principles Nehru stood firm; one of the fundamental articles of his faith was secularism. Today, if India is not a Hindu state, it is mainly due to the efforts of her first Prime Minister. Today, if Muslims and other minorities have a certain sense of security in this Republic, it is mainly due to his approach. During the 17 years that he ruled this country, he never wavered in his antagonism against the dark forces of communalism. Nothing ever shook him, neither attacks nor abuses. In fact, there are few instances in history where a prophet in the face of heavy odds remained so loyal to his creed. Secularism was not only the sheet anchor of Nehru's politics; it was in a sense the life-blood of his patriotism.

The severest test that Nehru faced was soon after the partition of the sub-continent when communal fury on either side of the borders, resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Muslims and the worst migration in recent times. Enough has been written and said about it, but the role of Nehru in safeguarding the values of secularism can never be forgotten. Some instances come to my mind to show the agony he felt and the manner in which he met the most unexpected challenges. For instance, in Bihar, when Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in the wake of Partition he rushed like a wounded tiger to the rescue of the unfortunate victims; unguarded he went to the scene of rioting and told the mob in Patna: "Kill me before you kill a Muslim". It was not an empty declaration; Nehru meant it. It had the desired effect on the rioters and the situation soon came under control. His action in other riot-stricken areas was as effective as in Bihar. In Delhi, he gave refuge to hundreds of Muslims in the Prime Minister's house; dozens of them he saved just by sheer personal intervention.

Those who had seen Nehru during those grim days just after 15 August, 1947, still worship him; according to them they had not come across a better human being. One instance is worth mentioning; it was so typical of the man.

One night after a strenuous tour of the riot-stricken areas, the Prime Minister returned home. It was pretty late. However, just as he was sitting for his dinner, he was informed that the rioters had decided to burn the whole of the Jamia Millia—the National Muslim University, founded in 1920 by the Ali Brothers and the Mahatma, as counterpoise to the Aligarh Muslim University,



A car set ablaze in Calcutta during the 1946 riots: communal frenzy

attack. That was the end; it came at about 2 pm.

Though nearing 75—he was six months short—Nehru did not want to die so soon; he wanted a few more years to finish the work he had taken on. On his death the following lines by Robert Frost, the great American poet, were found in a pad, written in his own handwriting:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

How would Nehru have liked to be remembered, after he was gone? He himself has given the answer, in words, which are most moving:

"If any people choose to think of me



**Nehru's
anti-communalism
was not one-sided; if
he was fighting Hindu
communalism now, he
had fought Muslim
communalism no less
valiantly in the past**

and then presided over by the famous educationist Dr Zakir Hussain, who later became the President of India. Nehru could not bear the thought of any damage to such an institution, which symbolised so much of good in our anti-British nationalism; he, therefore, rushed to the spot, again unaided and unguarded, and without any warning to the security staff. The moment the rioters saw him with anger writ large on his face, they became calm. The Prime Minister squatted on the ground, opposite the Jamia Millia and remained there for hours lecturing to them on the values of communal harmony and non-violence. Finally, the crowd dispersed peacefully.

Then there was a Muslim restaurant keeper in Delhi who saw a fellow Muslim being slaughtered in front of his shop. Agitated, he took the phone and rang up the Prime Minister. "Is that so?" cried Nehru, "I will come there right away." Within minutes he arrived with the police. Standing in the middle of the street, he directed the clean-up operations.

His action in the Punjab, then the most violently and badly affected province during the communal disturbances, was no less heroic. He toured the bloody areas in a jeep, sometimes at considerable risk to his life. In one town he was told that the Sikhs were plotting a wholesale massacre of the Muslims. Without fear he went to the Sikh quarters, rounded up their leaders and warned them: "If you harm one single hair of a Muslim, I will send in a tank and blast you to bits."

However, Nehru's anti-communalism was not one-sided, as the Hindu communalists especially the RSS would like us to believe; he had fought Muslim communalism no less valiantly in the past. Jinnah had no greater opponent, his politics, no greater enemy. It is not true that Nehru had any particular preference for the Muslims; but he believed that majority communalism was another form of fascism which breeds hatred and violence. In one of his letters to the chief ministers he told them that there are some among the Hindus who "rather foolishly think in terms of having communal riots and thus gaining two objectives. The first is to frighten and drive away the Muslims and the second is to make Hindus anti-government." Though more than two decades have passed since Nehru's passing away, the situation does not seem to have changed.

In his anti-communalism, Nehru had been considerably influenced by Gandhi on the one hand and Azad on the other. The Mahatma taught him to place politics on an ethical level; to preserve the



Nehru with Gandhi and Azad: stalwarts of secularism

spiritual unity of the people which was based on broad humanism; to live by truth; and to practise cleanliness in public life. From the Maulana he learnt "that there was no conflict between Islam and Indian nationalism", that the

two were complementary to each other; and should help to bring about an amalgam, which could prove of lasting benefit to all. From these two giants Nehru received all the confirmation that he needed of the fact that "Indian culture", to quote Gandhiji's words, "is neither Hindu, nor Islamic, nor any other wholly. It is a fusion of all." He asked Muslims not to despair and be despondent; they must learn "to be sharers, in common with others, in the triumphs and setbacks alike that may come our way. The present with all its unhappiness and misery will pass. It is the future that counts..."

That was said more than 30 years ago. How long will the deprived and the neglected have to wait for that "unhappiness and misery" to pass and when will India of Nehru's dream of a genuine secular state, where the followers of each religion will get what they must in every walk of life, be realised! ■

A Study Of Nehru edited by Rafiq Zakaria. Distributed by Rupe & Co. Price Rs 150.



Nehru was influenced by both Gandhi and Azad. The Mahatma taught him to preserve the spiritual unity of the people. From Azad he learnt there was no conflict between Islam and nationalism

A sporting problem

Sports bodies resist governmental interference

To the layman, the scenario is thoroughly confusing. Everyone suddenly seems very concerned about athletics. And yet, the squabbles between the government and its agencies on the one hand and the Amateur Athletics Federation of India (AAFI) on the other, could only work to the detriment of the sport in the country. This conflict of interests and egos is also the first manifestation of the effects of the control the government is seeking to exercise over the affairs of sports bodies in India.

The confrontation was inevitable. In fact, the government guidelines, presented in the form of "Operation Excellence" by the department of youth affairs and sports, ministry of human resources development, was a blatant attempt to exercise control over what a large number of sports officials feel constitute the internal affairs of the sports federations.

The government's thinking in this regard is that since it is the principal financier of sport in the country, it has every right to keep a tab on federation affairs and ensure that justice and fair play prevail. But, in the process, it has started to trample on the toes of almost every federation official.

Till now most federations did not muster the courage to get into a direct confrontation with the government. They knew they had to depend on the executive arm of the sports ministry, the Sports Authority of India (SAI), for their sustenance. Spiralling costs have made it difficult for individual federations to garner funds, not only for developmental purposes, but also for the training of their sportsmen, the staging of the national championships and participation in foreign competitions.

But recent developments have helped forge unity among all federations. This found expression in the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) statement that the premier sports control body in the country and the only one recognised in international sports circles considers the SAI-AAFI confrontation both unfortunate and undesirable. It has called on the government to desist from its attempts to control sport in the country, citing international norms where sports fed-

erations did not brook any interference from the government. And, it says, national governments elsewhere have the maturity to refrain from meddling in affairs sporting.

But not so in India. Here, the government feels it is doing sports a world of good by exercising almost total control. While a certain amount of surveillance may be necessary to ensure that government funds are neither squandered nor siphoned off for purposes other than sport, it is an insult to responsible social organisations like sports bodies to presume that the people manning them are not all clean. Some provisions of the government guidelines do smack of this suspicion.

"You mean to say there is so much nepotism or whatever that we will purposely select inefficient players and tarnish our own image and that of the country in international competitions?" asks one sports official. "I am not saying that every team that has left these shores has always been composed of the best talents available. But if people feel that one or two in, say, a 12-member squad do not deserve to be in them, isn't it a lot better than the government coming over to select Indian teams?" he says adding, "This is what is happening now."

The constitution of the selection committee for all federations is such that the government holds a majority. To select the national coach, the government has formed a committee consisting of the president of the national federation concerned or his nominee, an IOA representative, the director-general of SAI, a representative of the Teams wing of SAI

and one former international player in that discipline to be nominated by the government. Thus, the federation, at best, can hope to have two votes, including that of the IOA representative, while the government has three. Thus, the national coach can very easily be a person the government chooses. The same is the case with the selection of players for training camps prior to competitions abroad. Here, the national coach replaces the director-general of SAI.

Ever since these guidelines were issued last year, there has been friction between the government and the federations. Some of the more affluent sports bodies have decided to ignore the guidelines to the extent of not allowing the "former international, preferably an Arjuna awardee" to attend selection meetings.

But things came to a head with the selection of a 14-member squad to go to England on a training-cum-competition stint. While allowing 11 member to go,



the government refused permission to one athlete, a coach and the manager-designate of the squad. SAI sources say the athlete did not come up to the required norms. Argued a SAI official: "We wanted to send only those athletes whom we are considering for participation in the Beijing Asiad next year. That is, after all, what Operation Excellence is all about. Dhanvir (the athlete) has not measured up to that norm. Besides, he was the only long-distance runner in the group chosen. The rest are all middle-distance specialists. His coach was Hari Chand (former double gold medallist at the Asiad). SAI had to choose between him and another Asiad double gold medallist, Sriram Singh. Now, the athletes are all middle-distance runners and Sriram is a middle-distance specialist. Hari Chand is a long-distance specialist. Added to this is the fact that the foreign coach, Harry Wilson, is also a middle-distance specialist. We are paying through our nose for Wilson and would naturally try to maximise the benefits of his presence. He was the one who suggested training in England, because the country is considered the Mecca of middle-distance runners. He worked out the entire itinerary and used his influence in several quarters to get his Indian proteges into high-level competitions where normally the Indians would not have got a look in."



Margaret Alva presides over a SAI meeting in Calcutta: meddling in sports

AAFI sources, however, have a different story to tell. Honorary secretary Lalit Bhanot was categorical: "Hari Chand was penalised by SAI because he dared contradict some of Wilson's training methods with regard to long-distance running. Dhanvir was victimised because he was training under Hari Chand. And SAI wanted to 'teach us a lesson' by not clearing the manager of the squad, Arun Banerjee, who also happens to be a very senior AAFI official."

This confrontation led to a midnight drama on the day of the team's departure for UK. Several AAFI officials camped at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi to prevent the squad from going, unless the athlete, coach and manager were also allowed to proceed with the team. The AAFI officials stayed on till the scheduled time for departure of the flight was over.

However, immediately after they left, SAI officials learnt that the flight had been delayed by over three hours. The athletes and coaches were asked whether they would make the trip. With their assent, according to SAI sources, they were packed off to the airport and then on to London.

This infuriated the AAFI officials. They called a press conference and also sent a memorandum to the IOA. It was on the strength of the AAFI letter that the IOA took its official stand, decrying government interference.

The issue of the manager, in particular, has upset the AAFI. "The guidelines included a provision for the intending manager of a squad to be present at the coaching camp for at least 15 days," said another SAI source. "This provision has been made to ensure that players don't have to run around for their requirements prior to the trip abroad. They could thus concentrate on their training," he added.

To this, AAFI sources say that such a specific duration should not be mandatory. "How can you say that arranging for the players' trip will not take a day more or less than 15? If a man knows his job, he could do it in two, or even one day," said an experienced AAFI official. "This is a ridiculous stipulation."

Actually, the AAFI was keen on



JAGDISH YADAV

The government thinks that since it is the principal financier of sports in the country, it has every right to keep a tab on federation affairs and ensure that justice and fair play prevail

AAFI secretary Lalit Bhanot (extreme left) with P.T. Usha and her coach, Namblar: decrying governmental control

sending Banerjee because, as a high-ranking official of the AAFI, he was expected to negotiate several programmes for Indian athletes abroad as well as international events in India. Rather than conduct a lengthy correspondence, direct dialogue, they felt, would have helped the AAFI.

"See what happened to the team?" said another AAFI source. "The players were stranded in England without money as the SAI people couldn't get them their foreign exchange in time. Although for a short time, they had to go without their basics. Harry Wilson paid some money from his own pocket to save the situation. But this is what

had chosen 14, including coaches. At the selection trials, a SAI official concurred with the others in choosing the 14. Later, however, the sports ministry allowed only six to go. The AAFI decided to send the others at their own cost. SAI sources said that they refused permission for the rest because the meet was inconsequential. "When we invite athletes, we give them all facilities. A country like Malaysia, whose standard is far below ours, would have been pleased to provide hospitality to all the Indian athletes. That is why, since they wanted to pay for six members, we decided to send only that number."

The AAFI felt otherwise. "If they

(SAI) want our athletes to feel good by taking part in international events, they should have given the airfare and other costs of sending the entire contingent. They can't say one thing and do another."

To make matters worse for SAI, five of the athletes sent by AAFI at its own cost, won medals at the meet. "Now the athletes are feeling much better. They will have the drive to improve further and give better service to the country," AAFI officials say.

After the return of this contingent, there was more controversy in store. SAI refused to pay the airfare of these five athletes after they arrived in Delhi for their onward journey to the athletics camp in Bangalore. Again, AAFI had to pay. A SAI source said that since the AAFI had sent these athletes, they naturally would have to send them back to the camp at their own cost.

More important, however, is the allegation that these five athletes were asked to pay for their board and lodging at the camp. Although denied by a SAI official, AAFI secretary Lalit Bahnot said that he had been asked by a SAI officer to meet the bills.

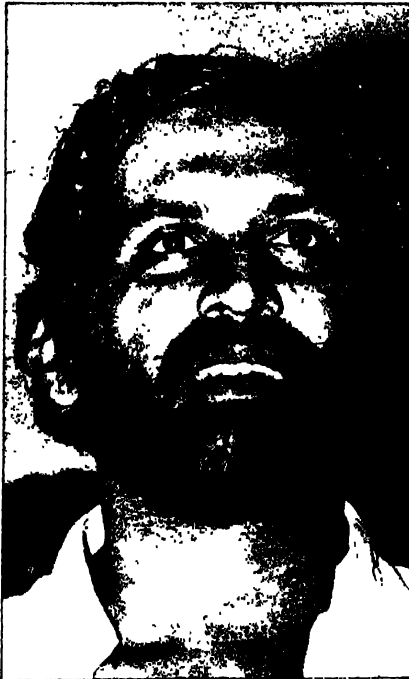
The IOA secretary-general, Randhir Singh, said: "This has come as a blessing in disguise. If SAI had not provoked the AAFI, the IOA would not have been so fiercely united in staving off government interference. It is good for sports in India."

Insiders believe that this row is much more than a mere SAI-AAFI conflict. It is actually a conflict between sports minister Margaret Alva and AAFI president Suresh Kalmadi. The latter has managed to cut across party lines to find support for his opposition to the method employed by Margaret Alva to "control sports bodies".

But right now, not much is expected by either side. Everyone is awaiting the date of the general elections, knowing that alignments could change with the election results. This also means that the sports bodies like the AAFI cannot do much but to wait for the next sports minister.

In the meantime, however, another confrontation between SAI and AAFI is in the offing. The date for the start of the prestigious Asian track and field meet to be held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium coincides with the government's plans for staging its Spartakiad-like "Bharatiyam", basically a physical exercise-cum-dance routine, at the same place. Both the events are important but one will have to wait for a few days more to see who wins this latest round.

Arijit Sen/New Delhi



Margaret Alva (left) and Suresh Kalmadi: clash of the titans

happens when you don't send an experienced manager with a team."

SAI has no answer to this. But it did have an explanation for the fiasco over sending a squad to Malaysia. A senior SAI official said that the Sports Authority had chalked out plans for participation of Indian trainees in different categories of international meets. The Asiad medal prospects would be sent to the most competitive, while the second stringers would go to smaller meets. This was being done not only to keep their competitive edge but to give the athletes the feeling that they could go abroad for competitions, instead of slogging it out in training camps, month after month. It was to be treated as a relief from the grind.

But the Malaysian meet opened up a new ground for squabble. The Malaysians invited only six athletes, but AAFI

Insiders believe that the SAI-AAFI confrontation is much more than a mere clash of egos. It is actually a conflict between sports minister Margaret Alva and AAFI president Suresh Kalmadi

Combating a menace

Weddings in India are fast becoming an occasion to flaunt wealth. Borrowed wealth in most cases. The menace of dowry is eating into the vitals of society. Laws have sadly failed to dissuade the grooms from squeezing the last penny from the bride's parents. And, social organisations have so far failed to create an awareness among the people on the evils of the dowry system. But dowry deaths every day have not deterred the government or social bodies from tackling the crisis.

In this respect, the West Bengal regime has taken the lead. Recently, the government has made it mandatory for all to submit a detailed list of items and cash received as dowry within a month of the marriage to the authorities. The state's education branch has proposed that "the menace of dowry" be included in the syllabuses of the higher secondary examination. A laudable aim, but it remains to be seen whether the new policy will work.

Aping stunts

It was a *filmi* stunt that paid off, not once but twice. In Delhi, a starstruck woman, Prem mastered the art of thumbing lifts in cars and then extorting the money from the drivers.

Where did she get the idea from? Apparently, the lady was an Amitabh Bachchan fan and—what with imitation being the sincerest form of flattery—tried to ape a stunt from one of his blockbusters, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, where the heroine would thumb a lift, and, after getting into the vehicle, threaten to scream if the occupant did not cough up the money.



However, you can't fool all the people all the time. The police got wind of her activities, and decided to lay a trap for her. Two sub-inspectors got into a car as decoy passengers along with a public witness. Prem thumbed a lift, as usual, in their vehicle, and was about to repeat her ploy, when an SI's card was flashed at her.

And what did the police recover from her? The star's photograph and a few letters addressed to him. The moral of the story: conned (pun intended) ideas do not last long.

Unique tribute

This is a unique tribute to one of the greatest leaders India—and the world—has ever seen. In Kanpur, a nine-pillar column, bearing details

of Nehru's will, is being installed at Phool Bagh. The details of the testament were made public after his death more than two decades ago.

The artist behind the exquisite handiwork is Kamta Prasad Srivastava of the Singhania Art Gallery, who told the press that about 3,000 words from the testament have been etched on the pillars. The project, which entails an expenditure of about Rs 1 lakh, was conceived by the newly-elected mayor of the city, Sriprakash Jaiswal.

The head of the column bears a "blessing palm" and a garland displaying the will.

Unusual hobby



Cops are generally associated with weapons like the gun or the *lathi*. But Prasant Kumar Das is made of

different mettle. The Calcutta policeman is a good calligrapher. He has an unusual hobby of copying various pages of newspapers, word for word. What's more, he even paints them, picture for picture.

He has already copied Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Telugu and Malayalam newspapers. He even copies front pages of dailies. Das has never exhibited his works but receives a lot of encouragement from friends and relatives.

The best gift

It was perhaps the best birthday gift he could aspire for. For 19-year-old V. Srinivasan of Madras, 22 July this year brought in its trail a unique gift: a sackful of greeting cards—18,850 to be precise. The birthday boy now expects to enter the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Srinivasan, a third-year polytechnic student, had been planning to do this for a long time. He passed the word around to his friends about his intention to create a world record on his birthday and had requested each



one to inform their friends so that more and more people would send him greetings.

Needless to say, his contacts—and his perseverance—paid off. And how!

THIS INDIA

● **TIRUCHI:** The Madras-Karaikudi Kamban Express was stopped recently for a peculiar reason: to wake up a gateman who was taking a nap on duty. The incident happened between Sirkazhi and Kollidam stations. The train was stopped for about ten minutes. The gatekeeper, Pitachal Muthu, had not closed the level crossing gate. The train came to a grinding halt on not getting the green signal to cross the gate. Its crew rushed to the gate cabin only to see that the gateman was fast asleep—*Indian Express* (Savitri Viswanathan, Madras)

● **PUNE:** A woman vegetable vendor at Bhor near Pune summoned all her mental faculties to make sense of the contents of the electricity bill issued by the Maharashtra State Electricity Board recently. The quarterly charges—*from February to April 1988*—amounted to a staggering Rs 3,80,999.70—*Indian Express* (N.V. Vimala, Bangalore)

PRIZE RS 100 FOR THE ENTRY GIVEN FIRST

SUNDAY WEEK

BEGINNING 6 AUGUST 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

This will be a good week for you financially. Speculators and gamblers will do well. Avoid dealings with a member of the opposite sex, as she may hamper your career. Devote a lot of time to your family this week, particularly children. Keep a vigilant eye on your health. A favourable week for trekkers.

Good dates: 6, 7 and 12

Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: South-east



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

This will be a good week for those of you who are bothered by pending lawsuits. Some of you may inherit property. Be careful about lending money this week. Your friends may need help, so give them all the support you can. Sportsmen, this will be a hectic week for you. You may have to go on a long journey.

Good dates: 7, 9 and 10

Lucky numbers: 2, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: East



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

Executives, this week you will be called upon to shoulder new responsibilities. So, be alert and conscientious.

Speculators and gamblers, proceed carefully for you may incur losses. Students, you will secure good results in your examinations. Avoid political discussions, as you may find yourself in trouble.

Good dates: 8, 9 and 11

Lucky numbers: 3, 4 and 8

Favourable direction: South-west



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

Professionals, hard work and foresight will bring you success in the near future. Artists, expect recognition

this week. Businessmen, this is the time to make new investments. You are likely to gain a new friend who will help you in unexpected ways. Lovers, a word of caution: an affair will come to a sudden end.

Good dates: 6, 8 and 10

Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: South



LEO (21 July—20 August)

This will be a good week for all of you. Businessmen, any investments you make will fetch good returns.

Speculators, you are in for luck this week. For those of you who are unemployed, job prospects lie ahead of you. In this matter, you will be helped by your elders. Lovers, relationships will remain smooth.

Good dates: 9, 10 and 12

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: West



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

This will not be a good week for most of you. Many of you will be neglected by your close friends and many may turn against you.

You may face some problems at home. However, patience and fortitude will see you through this crisis. Sportsmen, however, will receive recognition this week.

Good dates: 7, 10 and 11

Lucky numbers: 7, 8 and 9

Favourable direction: South-east



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

This will be a good week for all of you. A word of encouragement for those of you who are employed:

expect praise from your seniors. Businessmen, speculative ventures will prove successful. This will also be a good time to settle legal problems. Lovers, many of you will be married in the near future.

Good dates: 9, 11 and 12

Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 8

Favourable direction: North



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

This will be a week of mixed fortunes. Some of you will gain financially from unexpected sources.

Businessmen, be wary of launching new ventures this week. Many of you will go on a vacation you have had in mind for a long time. Students, you will do well in examinations. Keep an eye on your health.

Good dates: 8, 10 and 11

Lucky numbers: 1, 2 and 4

Favourable direction: South-east



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

Businessmen, forge ahead with whatever plans you have in mind this week.

Many of you who are unemployed will find jobs in the near future. Some of you may go on a long journey soon. There will be some domestic worries, especially regarding children.

Good dates: 6, 7 and 8

Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 7

Favourable direction: West



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

Servicemen, you will be in for some criticism from your seniors this week. However, there

is nothing to worry about and it should only make you work harder. You will soon be rewarded for your efforts. Your colleagues and friends will misunderstand you, so avoid arguments.

Good dates: 7, 9 and 12

Lucky numbers: 2, 4 and 6

Favourable direction: North-east



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

A pleasant and active week lies ahead of you. Businessmen, the

time is ripe for finalising new contracts. It would be advisable if you recover your losses from investments you have made in the past. Lovers, try to mend strained relations this week. Speculators may do well.

Good dates: 10, 11 and 12

Lucky numbers: 4, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: South



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

Financially, this will be a good week for lucrative ventures. Speculators and gamblers, you are likely

to fare well. Those of you who are unemployed can expect to get jobs in the near future. Lovers, a word of caution: those of you who are planning to get married may run into difficulties.

Good dates: 8, 9 and 10

Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 5

Favourable direction: East

Star Partners: Virgo—Cancer

The Virgo woman is a very independent woman. But the Cancer man is of a different nature. He pays too much attention to his family, something the Virgo woman does not like. The Cancer man may, therefore, find her to be cold and indifferent.



Hegde at bay

When in power, Ramakrishna Hegde had this penchant for appointing commissions of inquiry at the first whiff of controversy. Now he is getting a taste of his own medicine.

First, the Karnataka government has revived the commission that was constituted to inquire into the charges of bribery against the former CM's son Bharat Hegde in the MD seat scandal. The term of the first commission ran out without any work being accomplished, so the government reconstituted it, with Justice Parameshwar of the Allahabad High Court being asked to complete the task, this time round.

In August, yet another commission will begin investigating allegations against Hegde. The Kuldip Singh Commission, which will inquire into the land scandals in which the Janata Dal leader has been implicated.

To complete the gloomy scenario, Subramaniam Swamy is moving heaven and earth in an effort to transfer the defamation case against him to Bangalore, where he can play out his role of martyr in a good cause under the full glare of media attention.

And, in the process, damage Hegde's prospects at the next polls.

A Ray of hope?

Siddhartha Shankar Ray seems to have pipped the others to the post, in the race for the Calcutta (north-west) seat.

For some time now, a number of West Bengal Congressmen, including Union minister of state for commerce Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, the MLA from Burabazar Rajesh Khaitan, and the pugnacious Rajya Sabha



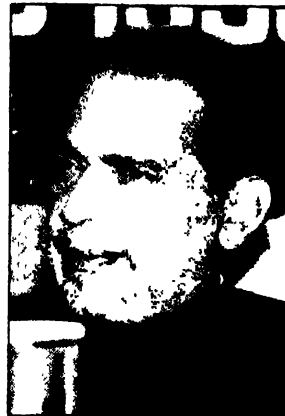
Swamy: wanted, a transfer

member D.P. Roy, have been eyeing the constituency, which has traditionally returned Congress candidates to the Lok Sabha. Ashoke Sen, former Union Law Minister, had established permanent rights over it in the past. But now that he has joined the Janata Dal, the seat is up for grabs. Local Congressmen believe that the seat remains 'safe' and any candidate nominated by the Congress(I) high command is certain to be elected.

The high command appears to think that the seat is best given to Ray, who after his fair performance in Punjab deserves an easier job. Party sources also hint that Ray might be given a ministerial assignment after the next Lok Sabha polls.

Not that Ray has it all sown up. For, he has failed at the hustings twice before. He lost in 1984 (Darjeeling) and in 1986 (Birbhum). And this may well work against him.

Siddhartha Shankar Ray: made it



Hegde: gloomy scenario

Watered down



Sharad Pawar: working things to his advantage

Trust Sharad Pawar to turn even the fury of nature to his advantage. The beleaguered Maharashtra CM, charged of all manner of wrong-doing in what has come to be known as the dereservation scandal, hit upon a novel way of mollifying the Opposition, all set to make his life miserable in the House.

On an aerial survey of the flood-hit areas of the state, to assess the damage to life and property, Pawar did what no other chief minister in the long history of the Indian republic has ever done. He took Opposition leaders such as Mrs Mrinal Gore and Mr Hande along for a ride.

Predictably, the performance of these stalwarts in the Assembly, when the great

land scam came up for discussion, was nothing to write home about. All Mrinal Gore could manage was a weak dig to the effect that since Pawar was so close to these infamous builders he could dip into their pockets to help the flood victims.

No entry, please

The Sri Lankan government has never made any secret of the fact that it disapproves of the IPKF allowing their favoured ones into Jaffna, without the mandatory visas. But for the first time in recent history the foreign office actually went to the extent of lodging a formal protest, to this effect.

They had good reason. After the assassinations of the two TULF leaders, Colombo went out of its way to facilitate the entry of Indian VIPs such as minister of state K. Natwar Singh, who wished to attend the funeral. The Sri Lankan deputy high commissioner in Madras despatched two officials to the Tambaram IAF base to stamp their visas, and expedite their departure.

But strangely enough, on that day itself, another IPKF aircraft took off from the same base carrying a party of 21 persons, some journalists, others political leaders. None of them saw fit to avail of the facilities provided. In fact, they did not even bother to carry their passports. Piqued no end, the Sri Lankan authorities lodged an official protest with the Indian high commissioner in Sri Lanka, L.N. Mehrotra.

This had little effect, though. Barely a week later, the IPKF was at it again. It carted a dozen Madras scribes around on a conducted tour of the north-eastern provinces in Sri Lanka. These 'guests' had no passports, no visas, and certainly, no foreign exchange.

The yogi and the commissar

Politics makes strange bedfellows—and none more strange than Comrade Atal Behari Vajpayee and Pandit E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

Yes, that's how the BJP leader and the general secretary of the CPI(M) were described by a senior Janata leader at the meeting where the Opposition drew up its mass resignation plan. Once the decision had been taken, *bonhomie* prevailed, with a smiling L.K. Advani shaking hands with an equally cheerful EMS. Prompting one of those present to give Vajpayee and Namboodiripad their incongruous sobriquets.

Perhaps, not so incongruous, after all. Vajpayee was a member of the All India Student Federation in his student days, and EMS happens to be in the line of the direct descendents of Adi Shankaracharya.

Good God!

The Opposition's reputation as the gang that can't shoot straight has been established. For, their latest stratagem to embarrass the Prime Minister is sure to backfire on them, with disastrous consequences.

The Janata Dal leaders have decided to conduct a poster war, accusing Rajiv Gandhi of having made a pile in the Bofors deal. The visual would have Rajiv, in the traditional garb of Lord Krishna, tucking into butter oozing out of an earthenware pot, bearing the now infamous (at least to the collective Indian consciousness) names—Bofors, HDW, etc.

The blurb has the PM singing plaintively: "Maia more, mai nehi maakhan khayi. (No, mother, I didn't



Atal Behari Vajpayee: communist sympathiser

have the butter.") Implying that all the PM's protestations of innocence in the various scams are so much hogwash, and that his complicity in the scandals is very nearly proved.

The Congress(I) remains singularly unperturbed. Members reason that the posters will only impart religious sanctity to the PM's various acts of omission and (ah, you said it!) commission. The reference, oblique though it may be, to Rajiv's dead mother will only lead to a fresh wave of sympathy. And there's nothing like identification with a godly figure, to enhance one's chances at the hustings.

Right, Mr N.T. Rama Rao?

Rajiv Gandhi: *Hare Krishna*

Catechism

Question to V.V. Prasad: Have you asked Labour Party MPs to resign?

Answer: We have not asked Labour Party MPs to resign, only because there are no Labour Party MPs in Parliament.

Who is V.V. Prasad? None other than the President of the Labour Party of India (founded by the late President V.V. Giri). And who has been asking him such embarrassing questions? None other than Mr Prasad, himself.

The catechism came in a press release issued in Delhi by the Labour Party welcom-

ing the *en masse* resignation of the Opposition. Prasad hailed the step as an example of "Gandhian *satyagraha*" And then spoilt the effect with that question-answer bit.

On the bench

The Opposition's resignation drama had its lighter moments. After handing in their resignations to the Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar, the Opposition MPs trooped into the Telugu Desam office in Parliament, to hold an impromptu press conference.

It was full house. The entire city press corps, as well as representatives of foreign newspapers, magazines, radio and TV networks were out in full force.



Madhu Dandavate: punished?

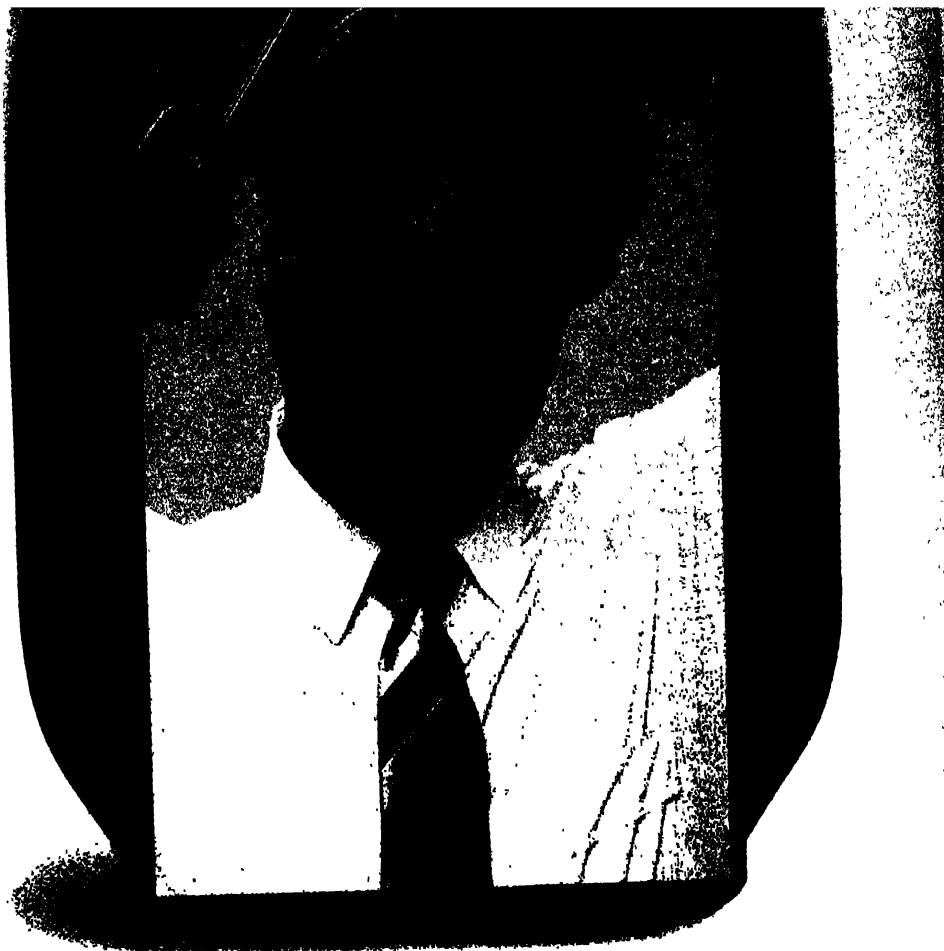
So much so, that one photographer, who got there a little late, found that he could see very little of the proceedings. He stood it for some time, and then yelled out to Janata leader Professor Madhu Dandavate, who was briefing those present on what had transpired in the House, that he stand up on the bench, instead.

While everyone broke up at this unusual request, Dandavate though fazed, reacted with great spirit. "Nobody, not even my teachers in school, has asked me to do that," the professor quipped good-naturedly. ■

GAUTAM PATOLE



"I was impressed
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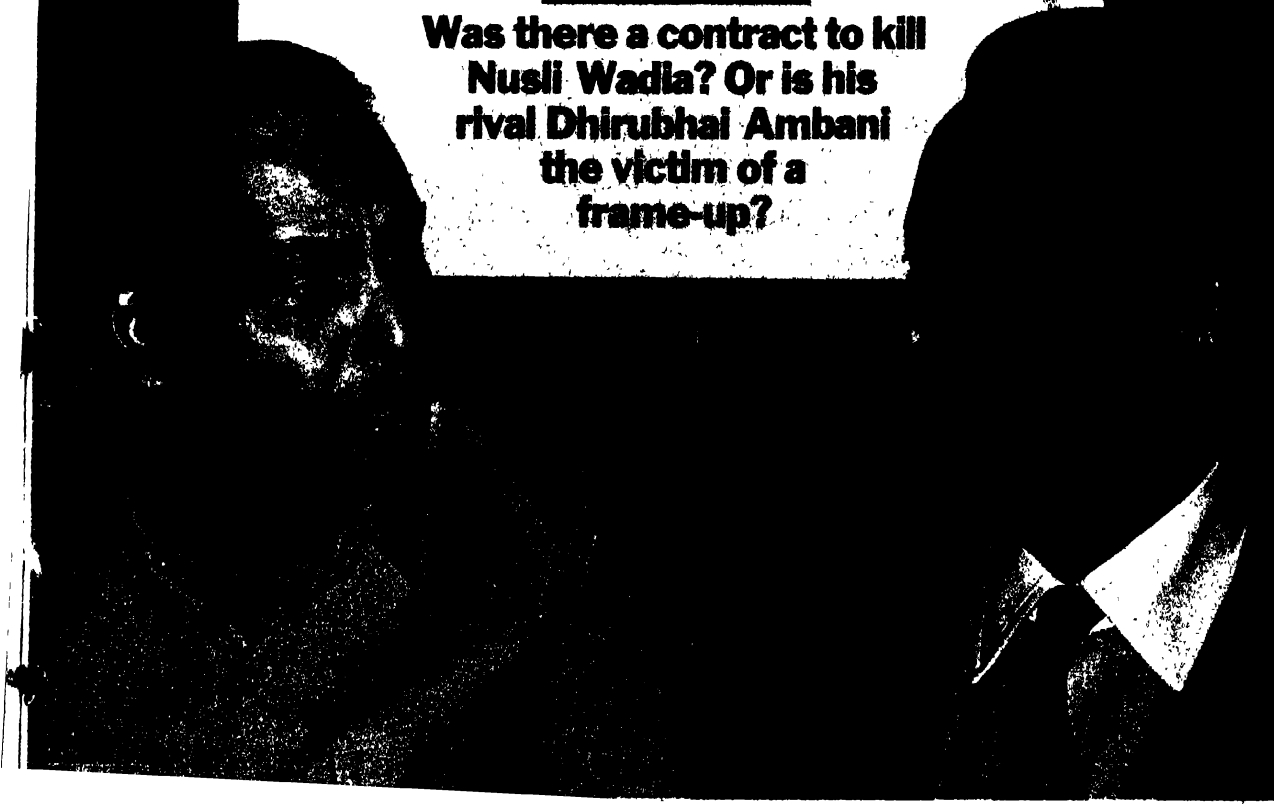
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THE RSS: MORE POWERFUL NOW THAN EVER

SUNDAY

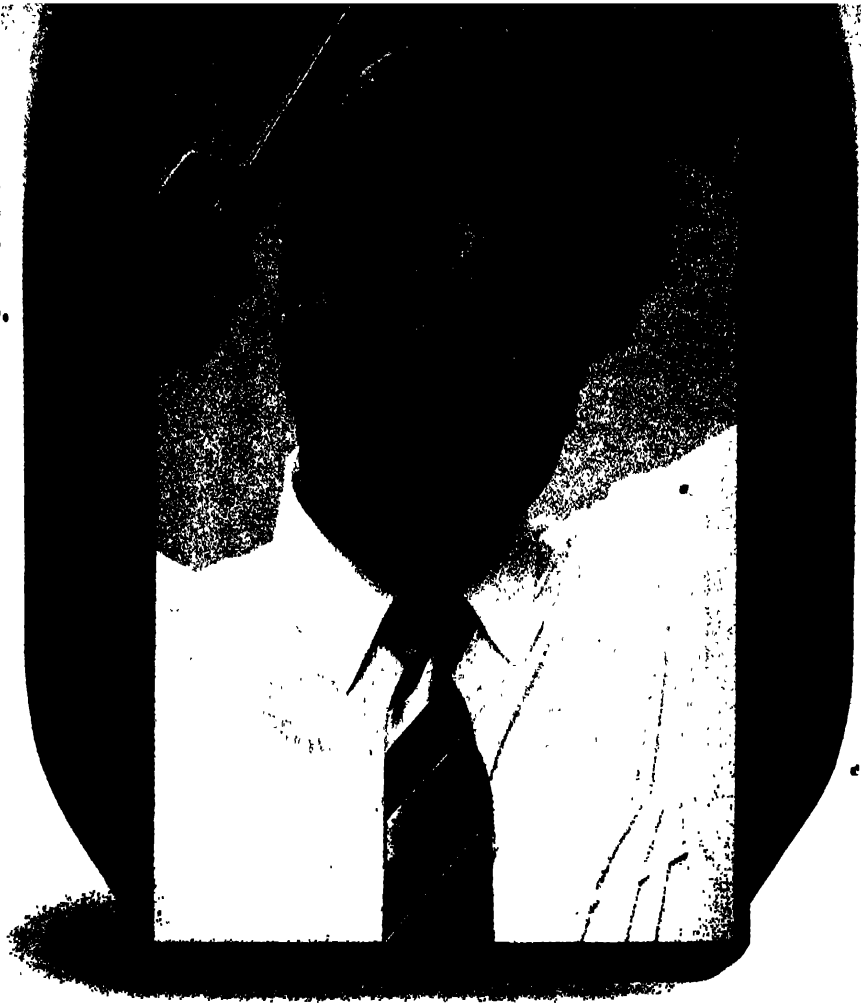


*Was there a contract to kill
Nusli Wadia? Or is his
rival Dhirubhai Ambani
the victim of a
frame-up?*

COUP, COUNTERCOUP AND MURDER

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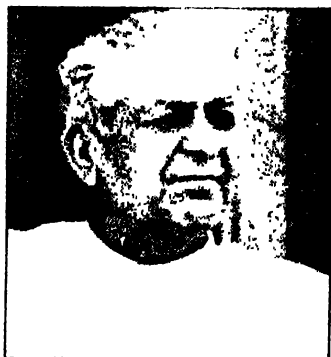
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LETTERS

Lavish lifestyle

The layout was good as were the photographs (*Have money will spend*, 23—29 July). However, I was amazed to learn that in a country where 60 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line and the per capita loan is estimated at Rs 650 against the per capita income of Rs 255, there are people who can afford to spend as much as Rs 40,000 on a gown!

The consumer industry is reaping a golden harvest, thanks to the inflow of black money. It is indeed distressing to know that while a section of society does not even have the money to buy a cake of soap, another spends Rs 6,000 for a dinner and even has a birthday party at a cost which is more than the settlement dues, accruing to a petty government clerk after 33 years of service. Such vulgar exhibition of wealth needs to be stopped.

Nanda Dulal Roy Chowdhury, Kharagpur (West Bengal)

Birds of a feather

1979 brought a change in Indian politics, a change for the better (1979: *Dreams die fast*, 2—8 July). The three years of Janata rule brought nothing but shame to India. It even destroyed the existing establishment. The Janata leaders were so busy trying to grab power that they even forgot about the electorate which had voted them to power. They had nothing to offer to the people except the reports of the Shah Commission of which



A boutique in Madras: trendy and costly

nothing came ultimately. In the process, the nation was in a shambles. It was inevitable that India would turn to Mrs Gandhi and pin its hopes on her.

Ten years later, with elections drawing near, the Janata is once again fumbling in trying to unite and win back the faith of the electorate. But it is doubtful whether the people will forgive them their trespasses.

Vijaya Moorthy, Pune (Maharashtra)

To quit or not to quit

Jayalalitha is the *prima donna* of Tamil Nadu politics (*Goodbye doesn't mean farewell*, 16—22 July). Over the last few years she has emerged as one of the leading personalities in India comparable to the likes of Indira Gandhi, Vijayraje Scindia and Maharani Gayatri Devi. Unlike her contemporaries



Jayalalitha: whimsical

aries. Vijayanthimala, Jayanti Natarajan and Uma Gajapati Raju who have only lent glamour to the party, Jayalalitha has always portrayed herself as a woman who means business. However, it is to the late MGR's credit that Jayalalitha has emerged as a woman with poise and strength.

Despite the odds stacked against her, she has managed to hold her head high. Her emergence as the leader of the Opposition in Tamil Nadu is an open manifestation of her success. Hats off to this great woman who has made an otherwise chauvinistic society eat its words.

R. Subramaniam, Madras (Tamil Nadu)

■ At a time when everything is working to her advantage—the united AIADMK wants her leadership and the Congress (I) is almost ready to work out an alliance with her—there is no reason why she should quit politics. However, if she is serious this time, there must be some strong reason behind her decision. On the other hand, she may be up to her old trick of crying 'wolf'.

A. Jacob Sahayam, Trivandrum (Kerala)

A violent valley

More than four decades after India attained Independence, Kashmir continues to be in a state of turmoil (*And unquiet lies the*

valley, 9—15 July). Peace, which had remained a dream in the regime of Sheikh Abdullah, is proving to be more elusive under his son, Farooq Abdullah. Aided by the incompetence of the Farooq administration, pro-Pakistani forces are rapidly gaining strength in the valley. Bomb blasts and street violence are the order of the day. If steps are not taken immediately, the alarming situation might turn the border state into a hot bed of subversion and terrorism.

Manoj Jain, Serampore (West Bengal)

No peace, this



Subash Ghisingh: having his way

An agitator turned administrator turned dictator, Subash Ghisingh appears to have got what he wanted (*Giving peace a chance*, 25 June—1 July). But, sadly, it is at the cost of the common man. Darjeeling has virtually become a Gorkhaland.

A friend working as a cashier in the West Bengal State Electricity Board was transferred from Asansol to Darjeeling in May 1989. Since he was not allowed to join the Darjeeling office, he had to report at the Jalpaiguri office. There is no more the thrill of visiting the beautiful hill station. Costs are exorbitant and safety is at stake. We are giving peace a chance. But given the present scenario, peace in Darjeeling is destined to remain elusive.

P. Sarkar, Rasulpur (West Bengal)

Sycophancy



K.K. Tewari: his master's voice

Rajiv's battering ram, K. K. Tewari, the so-called 'professor', is the biggest sycophant in the Congress(I) regime (*Delhi Diary*, 9—15 July). Tewari is not more abusive than he is foul-mouthed. As long as this man remains the minister for information and broadcasting, nothing on television will be worth watching. The news clippings will continue to be hogged by large portraits of the Prime Minister. I wonder if it was prudent on Rajiv Gandhi's part to keep this man in his cabinet.

Benjamin Mohapatra, Ashapalli (Orissa)

Illogical

Sri Lanka's continued diatribe against India, which has acted as a benefactor to thousands of Tamils in the island, only reveals the shallowness of the average Sri Lankan (*Power games*, 16—22 July). President Premadasa is being illogical in demanding the withdrawal of the IPKF. He does not realise that the Sri Lankan army has neither the power nor the resources to fight the LTTE. Former President Jayewardene had recognised the need to keep the IPKF in the island. India has, since time immemorial, extended a helping hand towards its neighbours only to be misunderstood by them.

Chitra Hariharan, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Of soldiers and sailors

The photograph on page 15 ('India is violating our sovereignty', 16—22 July) has been wrongly captioned. It is not an IPKF soldier in the photograph but a lieutenant in the navy, whose rank is equivalent to that of a captain in the army. You are no doubt aware that in nautical parlance, the word 'soldier' has traditionally been used with derision. In the language of the sea, 'sol-

diering' means idling or wasting time. Similarly 'soldiers wind' means a fair wind, on the assumption that even a soldier would be able to manage at sea in such a wind (ref: *A Dictionary of sailing*, by F.H. Burgess, 1961).

I trust you will make amends to the nautical community and to the once senior service.

Shyam Chelani, Bombay (Maharashtra)

History repeated



Arun Nehru: exposed

Congratulations to Udayan Sharma for his brilliant investigative report (*Hawaiian holiday*, 9—15 July). Arun Nehru had spared no effort to paint Rajiv Gandhi as a paradigm of corruption with no conclusive evidence to support his claim. The onus of proving his innocence now lies with him. How will he ever account for the mammoth Rs 22 lakhs that he spent on his trip? In all likelihood, Arun Nehru was financed by someone abroad. If this is true, he must reveal the identity of his 'friend'. One wonders to what extent this 'friend' benefits from sponsoring Arun Nehru.

Regarding the PM, the less said about him the better. He asks the central government offices to curtail expenses and even launches an austerity drive. And then, without a care in the world, leaves for Lakshadweep with his entourage for a holiday at the cost of public money!

Kabishekhar Purkait, Calcutta (West Bengal)

Corrigendum

In our issue dated 2—8 July (Playing with pistols), we carried a photograph of A. K. Jajodia. We now learn that the man in the photograph is Alope Kumar Jajodia, and not Aditya Kumar Jajodia who is referred to in the story. Our apologies to both Jajodias—Editor.

On the rampage



The scene of the Moga massacre: deadly strike

The ghastly massacre of innocents at Moga once again brought to light the fact that the terrorists in Punjab have not yet given up their sinister activities (*Death at daybreak*, 16—22 July). The main motive behind this brutal assault on RSS workers was to create communal dis-

harmony. The government's inability to combat terrorism is a shame. It is time something concrete was done to curb nihilism which has greatly affected the country's peace, harmony and prosperity. Security measures must be reorganised and strengthened to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

Shashank Shekhar, Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)

SUNDAY

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An ugly menace



Communal riots seem to have become the order of the day

KHUSHIWANT SINGH

"It has more arms than an octopus," thundered Qazi Abdul Sattar, professor of Urdu at Aligarh Muslim University. He was orating at a meeting in Kanpur organised by Giriraj Kishore, head of the department of creative writing, IIT, and the Rotarians. Amongst the creative writers on the rostrum were Rajendra Yadav and Krishna Sobti and the saffron-clad *sadhu*-politician, Swami Agnivesh. There was a gory opening to the seminar. Police *bandobast* around the Merchant Chambers Hall almost got into disarray when a senior head constable ticked off an errant junior for neglecting his duty. The junior rewarded his superior by putting a bullet through his heart. We proceeded to discuss the menace of communalism as if nothing had happened.

THE AUDIENCE was most receptive; comparing communalism to the tentacles of an octopus was received with cries of *wah! wah!* "Who was the admiral of Shivaji's fleet?" asked Qazi Sahib. And answered the question himself. "A Muslim." He carried Shivaji's flags of secularism further. "Who was the commander of Shivaji's artillery? A Muslim. When Shivaji sacked Surat he brought back a copy of the Holy Quran bearing it reverently on his head." So great was Qazi Sahib's enthusiasm for the Maratha hero that he made him out as the vanquisher of the communal villain, Aurangzeb. I had not read of it in any book of history but in that atmosphere sentiment mattered more than historic facts.

Swami Agnivesh was closer to the present times. During his last election campaign in Haryana, they did not ask him what he proposed to do if he won but what caste he was—*too kis ka sai?* "I am a *bhang*—sweeper," replied Swamiji. "Then why didn't you put yourself from a reserved constituency?" they asked. "Because I clear all

drains, those of Harijans as well as of the Jats." He lost the election in Haryana but won a thunderous applause in Kanpur.

Rajendra Yadav deplored the appendage of caste to people's names. "The first thing an Indian wants to know about a stranger is his caste," he said. Quite true. We don't have to ask him about his caste because we know from his name that he is Yaduvanshi, an Aheer. Krishna Sobti put her sentiments in poetic prose and was suitably greeted with acclaim. We slew the canker of communalism ending on the note that all the world's communal save thee and me, and even thee is a little communal.

Qazi Sattar is right in saying that communalism is a many-armed octopus. And just as an octopus when attacked squirts ink to obscure the vision of its assailant, the communalist spreads canards which puts attackers off its trail. One cherished belief is in Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhaism*: we are all children of the one God who is both Ishwar and Allah, Ram and Rahim, *ergo*, Hindus and Muslims are brothers. The truth is that wherever people of different races, religions, languages and cultures have co-existed, instead of *bhai-bhaism* there is tension. And if land, property or business is involved, tension often explodes into violence. The other canard is that there were no communal riots before the British introduced their policy of divide and rule. Hindu-Muslim tensions and violence were there since Islam came to India. And before Islam there were conflicts between Hindus and Jains, Hindus and Buddhists, Dravidians and Aryans. The only guarantee of peace was when one community was unquestionably dominant and the other accepted subservience. Where Muslims ruled, Hindus dared not protest against discrimination. Where Hindus were the dominant power, Muslims acquiesced to injustice.

Wherever people of different races, religions, languages and cultures have co-existed, instead of *bhai-bhaism* there is tension. And if land, property or business is involved, then tension often explodes into violence

THERE WERE also periods of peace after protracted communal strife of the kind that accompanied the partition of the country. For 14 years after Independence till 1961 there were no communal riots in India. Since then we've had communal killing of some kind or the other every day of the year. During British rule communal violence was limited to Hindu-Muslim confrontations on religious holidays like Holi, Id-ul Zuha, the Ganapati festival, the commonest cause being playing of music before mosques. Riots occurred in a few riot-prone towns. Today, riots take place between Hindus and Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, Hindus and Christians, caste-Hindus and Harijans, tribals and non-tribals, Bengalis

and Assamese, Maharashtrians and Kannadas. The entire country has become riot-prone. Everyone's hand rises against his neighbour because everyone wants what his neighbour has—his land, his job, or his business. Racial, religious and linguistic differences provide the excuse to do so. The instigation usually comes from the educated middle class of tradesmen and politicians (except communists); their instruments are lumpen elements and the educated-unemployed.

Since economic conditions are not likely to improve in the near future nor jobs found for millions of the unemployed, what can we do about communal riots? Nothing very much except learn to live with them. ■



R.K. LAXMAN/THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rajiv Gandhi's government is very like Chengiz Khan's. He is the Prime Minister of the country and yet he conveniently forgets about his people's woes—the farmers have been in dire straits for more than two years now—and he keeps jazzing off abroad.

MAHENDRA SINGH TIKAIT, peasant leader

Rajiv Gandhi is a better person than V.P. Singh and Arun Nehru.

SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY, Janata Party leader

I don't think you can describe any seat as safe for the Congress(I) in the forthcoming elections.

GHANI KHAN CHOWDHURY, West Bengal PCC(I) president

All I said was that if the terrorists can use their guns so can my boys (police).

J.F. RIBEIRO, the Punjab Governor's adviser, referring to the 'bullet-for-bullet' theory

The law will take its course. I have given up all attachments and I am like a saint dedicated to the service of the people.

N.T. RAMA RAO, Andhra Pradesh chief minister, on his daughter filing for divorce

Inhone to Bakreshwar ka bakra bana diya.

VASANT SATHE, Union energy minister, criticising West Bengal's attitude to Bakreshwar

But the people who are at the helm of affairs today are prepared to do anything, including another partition, if it means their political survival.

RAM JETHMALANI, Rajya Sabha MP

I think someone must be insane to even consider that possibility.

MANU CHHABRIA, businessman, on whether there is any threat to his control over Dunlop from other corporate sources

The state needs Pawar. We want to have leaders like Pawar in all other states.

B. SHANKARANAND, Union law minister

Not at this moment.

JAYALALITHA, Tamil Nadu's Opposition leader, on whether she is quitting politics

If you see any of my films, I have never opened my shirt buttons to show my chest. I've never done anything to look evil or make me look like a villain.

SHAKTI KAPOOR, actor, on his image

In astrology we scrape through the layers of a man until he stands before us naked.

BEJAN DARUWALLA, astrologer and poet

Will anybody say that they're happy to be failures?

MADHURI DIXIT, actress, on whether she is ambitious

The new RSS

Bigger, stronger and in the thick of politics

Who has the Hindu card up his sleeve in the coming general elections? The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) may be the country's 'saffron brotherhood', but the Congress(I) has often beaten it at the communal game. It 'out-Hindued' the RSS at the 1984 elections, in the wake of Mrs Gandhi's assassination, and during the J&K Assembly elections in 1987, when the Hindu voters of Jammu thought that the Congress(I) was a better bet than the RSS' child, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Political pundits are divided over whether religion will play an electoral role this time round. But the RSS has no doubts. Its pre-poll warming-up exercises have just begun and its political muscles are flexing like never before. With true-blue RSS commissars now in formal control of virtually every wing of the BJP. The number of its members—direct and indirect—is spiralling upwards and its appetite for politics keener than

ever before. The RSS might have begun 64 years ago as an exclusive fraternity for Marathi Brahmins, but the religious-cultural organisation is now struggling to become a well-oiled machine.

Yet, there has hardly been any noticeable change in the RSS' activities: the routine morning drill of the *shakhas*, or branches, remains an inseparable part of the Sangh's 'business'. But the number of *shakhas* has spiralled, from a mere 10,600 in 1979, the year its friendly Janata government collapsed, to 37,000, including 17,000 *upshakhas* or sub-branches. Considering that each branch or sub-branch records a morning attendance of 14, the organisation now has a regular membership of over half a million tied by overt political kinship. Against a mere 1,200 *pracharaks*, or main organisers, a decade ago, RSS now fields more than 2,000 of them.

But it is not just a game of numbers. Its relationship with the BJP too has undergone a sea-change—from that of an ideological neighbour to a member of the "*sangh parivar*". Till last year, the

BJP was an enigma to hardcore RSS men for the ambivalent attitude it adopted towards the communal question and its mixed bag of "Gandhian socialism" and "positive secularism". But now the cloud of doubt* has been lifted, specially after the BJP accepted the RSS' tough line on the thorny Babri Masjid-Ram Janambhoomi issue. In the December 1984 Lok Sabha elections, Mrs Gandhi's assassination assumed such a communal colour that, in many areas, RSS men happily worked for the Congress(I) candidates. "Such a thing will never happen again," says Bhaurao Deoras, RSS working committee member, brother of the organisation's supreme Balasaheb Deoras, and his likely successor.

The process of including the BJP into the *sangh parivar* began early this year, after a fiat from the Sangh's headquarters (a four-storeyed building in the downtown Mahal area of Nagpur), which directed some RSS members to get involved in the functioning of the BJP. One



consequence of this was the induction, into the BJP national executive, of Govind Acharya, a dark and wiry Tamil Brahmin and a former teacher of mathematics at Banaras Hindu University. Acharya, an RSS *pracharak*, is a former organising secretary of the powerful student body, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). The ABVP was the base from which he built up his network of contacts in the influential academic and professional circles of the capital. Acharya lives in the BJP's party headquarters itself, on Delhi's Ashoka Road, and is always on the move—far outpacing popular but old-fashioned stalwarts like Atal Behari Vajpayee and BJP president L.K. Advani.

However, Acharya is but one in a series of top-level RSS appointments in the BJP. In Andhra Pradesh, for example, the RSS has put Venugopal Reddy on the BJP state executive. Reddy, although little-known politically, is one of the Sangh's ace *pracharaks* and until recently edited the RSS' Telugu weekly, *Jagriti*. In Gujarat, where seat adjustment talks between the BJP and the Janata Dal have been proceeding with virtually no hitch, the prime mover of the BJP's accommodative policy towards the Dal is the newly-appointed state general secretary, Narendra Modi. Until his recent induction into the party, he was the RSS divisional-in-charge (*bibhag prachark*) of Ahmedabad.



In the 1984 election, RSS men worked for Congress candidates. Says RSS working committee member, Bhaurao Deoras, "Such a thing will never happen again"

It is quite obvious from the recent pattern of the RSS' infiltration into the BJP that the Sangh is pushing its political surrogate to break away from its traditional policy of staying clear of other opposition parties. Says Acharya: "We want a no-split situation in the Opposition votes." It is possibly to ensure this that the RSS has begun to pressure the BJP into replacing its Rajasthan unit president, L.K. Chaturvedi, with Bhanwar Lal Sharma. Unlike Chaturvedi, Sharma enjoys a good rapport with the state's most charismatic Opposition leader and former chief minister, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. This factor alone weighed with the RSS to intervene in favour of Sharma.

Some BJP old-timers feel they are being rubbed the wrong way, but do not protest as they are not sure of their own strength. In the 1984 general elections, when the RSS did not support BJP candidates wholeheartedly, it won only two seats in the Lok Sabha and none in the largest state, Uttar Pradesh. But, with full RSS support, it did extremely well in the Haryana Assembly elections in 1987. There has been the stray case of open revolt though. In Orissa, when the RSS recently had the entire BJP state unit changed, Hari Chandan, the BJP state president, resigned from the party in protest and joined the Janata Dal. But the RSS doesn't seem to care. Debendra Pradhan, the new Orissa state unit chief of the BJP, is a hardcore member of the RSS. In Tamil Nadu, the RSS recently got the BJP to appoint one of its *pracharaks*, Vijayaraghavalu, as the state president, replacing Laxmanan. In Karnataka, Ananta Kumar, the new state general secretary of the BJP, is an RSS import.

In Uttar Pradesh, the state where the Opposition faces its toughest battle with the Congress(I), the RSS is attempting to infiltrate the BJP in a big way. Its plan is to put its own men in each district unit of the party. Already, two influential *pracharaks* of the RSS,

Balasaheb Deoras' controversial organisation is flexing its political muscles like never before. RSS men now occupy many key positions in the BJP and are influencing the party's politics





The routine morning drill of the *shakhas* still remains an inseparable part of the RSS' activities. But at the same time, this 'socio-cultural organisation' is quietly transforming itself into a well-oiled political machine

Kamalesh Kumar and Rampiyare Pandey, have moved into the state executive. Kumar is one of the *sambhag pracharak*s of the RSS in Uttar Pradesh, a rank higher than that of a *bibhag pracharak*. Pandey is the Banarās *bibhag pracharak*. Insiders aver that the Kumar-Pandey duo has the last word in the ongoing seat adjustment talks with the Janata Dal. In fact, it is said that they uphold the 'dove line' in the party and are prepared to settle for 19 or 20 seats out of Uttar Pradesh's 85. The 'hawks', in contrast, want nothing short of 35.

The BJP leadership may, in the present circumstances, look a bit like a puppet on the RSS string, but even Advani admits that there is "total ideological affinity" between the two organisations. For example, the BJP leaders, at the recent Palampur session, have unquestioningly accepted the RSS line that all governmental control should be lifted from the Ayodhya temple, or Ram Janambhoomi. Now the RSS-BJP combine is gearing up to turn the movement to "liberate" the Ayodhya temple into its main campaign platform.

The Ram Janambhoomi game plan chalked out at a recent meeting of the RSS in Nagpur, presided over by 'sar-sanghchalak' (supreme commander), Balasaheb Deoras, is both grandiose and sentimental. Next month, the RSS is organising a joint march with the BJP to all block headquarters and district centres of the country. Party cadres will simultaneously begin a campaign to urge every village in the country (there are nearly five lakh) to donate one brick each towards the construction of the temple. Also, each household will be asked to contribute Rs 1.25. Rajendra Singh, number four in the RSS hierarchy, says that this will not be impossible as the organisation 'reached' 2.5 lakh villages

last year, during the centenary celebration of RSS founder, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar.

Is the RSS moving with the times? Is it getting over its Brahminical bias and trying to make forays into areas where it did not even have a toehold, such as the peasant communities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes? Perhaps not, but men like Singh, who, unlike most others in the RSS top echelons, is a non-Brahmin Thakur, have a greater say in the organisation's affairs than before. Singh had, for 25 years, taught physics in Allahabad University, with celebrities like Meghnad Saha, and had even headed the physics department for four years. In fact, Vishwanath Pratap Singh was briefly his student in the M.Sc. classes, "one of our brightest students", as he recalls now.

During the past few years, 'pro-changers' like Singh have given a new

The RSS is now trying to gather support from non-traditional quarters such as the poor. Says Rajendra Singh, "We have better contacts with the other half"



direction to the organisation. Banabasi Kalyan Ashram, the RSS' outfit for the tribal areas, began from scratch but now has over 1,000 centres in tribal pockets. The ashram has 500 wholtime workers and 100 volunteer doctors. Seva Bharati, a relief service started only 10 years ago, now has 3,500 centres in the poor districts of cities and towns, while Vidya Bharati, the school project, has 850,000 students on its rolls. "We have better contacts with the other half of the society now," says Singh.

Both RSS and BJP leaders admit that the Ayodhya campaign will be used as the starting point for creating massive "booth-level" support for the general elections. There are generally about 350,000 polling booths for the Lok Sabha elections and the Congress(I) usually enjoys an edge over its rivals in putting together the best booth-level machinery, possibly largely because of its financial and organisational resources. But this time the BJP has already begun work at the lowest level, and hopes to give its candidates, in a projected 180 constituencies, an effective election machinery.

The RSS estimates that the booth-level operation will help the Janata Dal in the northern states and Orissa and the Telugu Desam party in Andhra Pradesh. "There will be a lot of give and take in the event of an honest seat adjustment," says one of the ideologues. And the RSS is all in favour of a seat adjustment because it feels that, in the words of Singh, "the chances of an ultimate rout of the Congress(I) is around the corner".

In all past elections, Opposition politics in the Hindi-speaking states has been divided into two streams. Agrarian communities, like the Jats, have been led by strong personalities, like the late Charan Singh, who aspired to become big on the national scene. The BJP, or the former Jan Sanghis, on the other hand, have held sway only over the upper castes and the trading communities in towns and cities. But the demise of Charan Singh and backward class leaders such as Karpooi Thakur in Bihar have whipped up a new cohesiveness, which, the RSS feels, will tip the electoral scale away from the Congress(I) in the next elections.

It may just be a pipe dream, but the RSS is convinced that the electoral arithmetic is stacked in favour of the Opposition. And so, it wants the member of its *parivar*, the BJP, to command a formidable presence in the next Lok Sabha, by taking a quantum leap from only two MPs to 50-plus.

Sumit Mitra/New Delhi

The BJP factor

Why the party is a problem for the Janata Dal and the leftists

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has always been tainted by a deadly stigma: the RSS connection. With its rightist, pro-Hindu inclinations, the BJP has traditionally been anathema to most other Opposition parties which see themselves as upholders of secular, mainstream politics. But politics makes strange bedfellows. And the exigency of Opposition unity has dictated the unusual compromise between the Indian left and the right. On the day before the mass resignations of Opposition MPs from the Lok Sabha (24 July 1989), newsmen were witness to the spectacle of communist chief E.M.S. Namboodiripad greeting BJP leader L.K. Advani. If the bonhomie was false, the two leaders did not show it. This despite the fact that Namboodiripad had consistently been warning the Opposition against any kind of dealings with the BJP, which he argued was one of the greatest threat to the secular politics of the country. But on that day, smiles hid the differences and while the two leaders exchanged greetings, other Opposition leaders, including Atal Behari Vajpayee, N.T. Rama Rao, Jyoti Basu and V.P. Singh, looked on benignly.

The meeting made history. On the surface at least, it seemed that the Indian left, the right and the centrist Opposition parties had actually come together. "Unity is for real. Our ground level feedback is that the people want one candidate against the Congress(I)," asserted Janata Dal leader Satya Pal Malik. "This feedback is obviously not coming to us alone, but also to the left and the BJP. There will be no difficulty in our having seat adjustments with the BJP on the one hand and the left on the other," he added.

Were then the endless debates on which way the Janata Dal would swing—left or right—finally over? And was the BJP no longer the "electoral untouchable" that it was even a year ago? But Janata Dal president V.P. Singh has been on record saying that the left was his "natural ally" while left leaders themselves had publicly warned the people of the dangers of Hindu communalism, as represented by the BJP. How is one to analyse the current attitude of the centrist Opposition and the left towards the BJP?

Prakash Karat, CPI(M) secretariat member, told SUNDAY recently that the attitude of the communists towards the BJP had in no way changed. "We have taken a united stand on the resignation issue. But we will not share the same platform with the BJP, or have a joint campaign. The impression that the left has acquiesced is incorrect," says Karat.

Karat stresses that though the left has agreed to the Opposition's proposal to observe a 'Save India Day' and Bharat Bandh, the communists were going to organise "separate functions and ral-

lies", and nowhere were they planning to share the podium with the BJP. Namboodiripad, in an article in the latest issue of *Peoples Democracy*, makes an identical observation. "It is significant...that on 25 July, three separate statements were issued by the four left parties, the National Front and the BJP respectively. The content of the three statements was, of course, the same—the call for a Bharat Bandh on 30 August, preceded by the observance of a Save India Day on 9 August, and by the visits of the resigning MPs to their



BJP president L.K. Advani (right) with Vajpayee: outcasts?

The CPI(M) is divided over the question of the Opposition having an electoral alliance with the BJP. While Namboodiripad is dead against any relations with the BJP, Jyoti Basu is willing to compromise for the sake of Opposition unity

respective constituencies to explain to the people the reason for their resignations. While the calls were separate, it was clear from the three statements that there would be no joint meetings, rallies or demonstrations."

But is the left no longer averse to an alliance with the BJP? Many political observers feel that the statements of Karat and Namboodiripad should not be taken seriously as the two leaders are only trying to put up a public facade of secularism. Others think that there are sharp differences among the communists over the question of having a pact with the Janata Dal should the latter ally with the BJP. While Namboodiripad is said to be against any relations with the BJP,



Many Janata Dal leaders feel that the party should have an alliance with the BJP since the move will prevent a split in the Opposition vote in the crucial Hindi belt

Janata Dal leaders: will they ally with the BJP?

issues". Satya Pal Malik feels that "apprehensions among a section of the Muslim community that seat adjustment with the BJP was a precursor of the latter being part of the government, in the eventuality of an Opposition victory, and a resultant change in policy is baseless." Malik says that "while forming a government, we will not compromise on our commitment on minorities and weaker sections." Another senior Dal leader felt that even when the BJP, or rather the Jan Sangh, was in power, the minorities had not got a raw deal. "It was during the Janata regime in 1978 that a prominent Jan Sangh leader, Navman, was arrested for instigating communal violence in Aligarh by the Charan Singh government... Atal Behari Vajpayee was the darling of the minorities even though he was a Jan Sanghi... Again, see the record of the Congress(I). Official killings of Muslims in the wake of communal tension has been

Jyoti Basu and his comrades from West Bengal are believed to be of the view that the left should not make an issue out of the BJP as it would harm the interests of the Opposition especially in the Hindi belt.

Dal leaders point out that Nambodiripad has begun to publicly observe, as he did in the capital last fortnight, that he "didn't think that there will be an alliance between the BJP and the Janata Dal". And Dal leaders have begun to voice similar views. For one, the Dal is acutely conscious of the fact that any truck with the BJP will alienate the Muslims from its fold, especially since the BJP has announced its stand on key issues like Ram Janmabhoomi, the Minority Commission and Article 370.

The BJP has come a long way since Vajpayee was the party president. With Vajpayee at its helm in 1980, the party had experimented with concepts like "Gandhian socialism" and "positive secularism". This was perceived as a "dilution" of the original Jan Sangh ideology and the hardcore RSS men within the party ranks felt alienated.

But the BJP's defeat in the 1983 Delhi municipal elections followed by the rout



Nambodiripad (right) and Jyoti Basu: divergence of views

in the 1984 general elections provided Vajpayee's critics with the opportunity they were looking for. Gandhian socialism had alienated the trading classes (the BJP's traditional vote bank) and "positive secularism" made the party's Hindu supporters disillusioned, they argued. Since then, the campaign within the party to "revert to the roots" gained momentum.

BJP general secretary K.L. Sharma says that the BJP and the Janata Dal will jointly participate in many of the functions and rallies planned on 9 and 30 August. But Dal leaders are yet to decide on this issue. They repeatedly stress that "seat adjustment did not mean that the Dal would compromise on

the highest under the Congress government," Malik points out.

Despite the sluggish pace of talks with the BJP, most Dal leaders feel that the party would do well to ally with the BJP as it would reduce the chances of a split in the Opposition vote in the crucial Hindi belt. In private, however, many of them say that they are not too enthusiastic about joint campaigning because of the fear of alienating the Muslims. The differences within the Dal over the BJP issue now revolve around the modalities of the electoral adjustment. The BJP's recent triumph in the municipal elections in Uttar Pradesh has only strengthened its bargaining power.

Patralekha Chatterjee/New Delhi

Ladakh lost



Communal violence destroys the social fabric of the once peaceful valley

At 14,800 feet, Ladakh may not be the roof of the world, but it has been well above mundane matters such as politics. For decades, the Buddhists and the Muslims of the region have coexisted peacefully, free from the communal politics that plagues the neighbouring Kashmir Valley. Ladakhis, the saying went, had only one enemy: the harsh, unrelenting environment. But suddenly, the people of this region find themselves confronted with a problem that they have never experienced before: communal violence. Arson, *bandhs* and a spate of violent clashes have shattered the peace in this picture postcard valley.

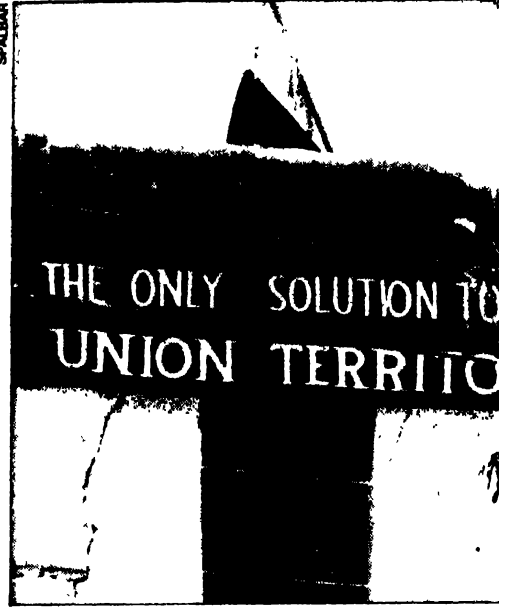
Largely insulated from the outside world, Ladakh suddenly hit the headlines about three weeks ago, when the army had to be called out to control clashes between the Buddhists and the Muslims in Leh. Soon, the violence spread to other towns in the region and, although the state government claims that the situation is "peaceful and under control", the tension is still palpable in Leh and Kargil as well as the villages and shanty towns around them.

Things have not been the same since 7 July. It all began with a group of Muslim youths attacking Rigzin Jora, the general secretary of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, at Leh's main market. To protest against this incident, a group of Buddhist boys came out on the streets and forced shopkeepers to down

their shutters. The congested part of the city, built around the vegetable market, soon became a scene of scuffles between the youths and the local shopkeepers, mainly Sunni Muslims from the Kashmir Valley who have recently settled in Ladakh. In the meantime, people of the two communities gathered in front of the town's mosque and the nearby Buddhist *gompa* (monastery) and started raising provocative slogans. Soon, the agitated crowds began pelting stones at the police station, the mosque and the *gompa*. Rival groups comprising hundreds of people were engaged in an hour-long clash. The main markets of the serene valley town were littered with stones and broken glass by the time the district administration declared curfew at about 8 pm.

But this was not enough to check the violence. Even during the curfew, two bombs were lobbed into the *gompa*, where a large number of Buddhists had gathered. The crude explosive devices, however, did not cause any harm to the building or the people inside it. The president of the Ladakh Buddhist Association and a member of the royal family, Thuptan Sewing, charges that the

Ladakh suddenly hit the headlines about three weeks ago, when the army had to be called out to control the clashes between the Buddhists and the Muslims



bombs were acquired from extremists in the Kashmir Valley. The meerwaiz of Leh, Mohd Omar Nadvi, however, refutes this and claims that bombs were thrown on some mosques as well.

The violence quickly spread to other parts of the city. Irate mobs set fire to two kiosks and a taxi by the time the army was called out. The leaders of both communities charge that the district administration did little to bring the situation under control. The only action the state government took, after two weeks of violence, was to shift the deputy commissioner and the superintendent of police of Leh district.

There is evidence to suggest that tension between the two communities in Ladakh existed a little before the Rigin Zora incident. The communal polarisation was obvious during at least two football matches between teams comprising players of each of the two communities. Supporters of the rival teams raised slogans and delivered speeches at the city's main markets after the matches.

On 6 July, a day before the assault on Jora, a Muslim taxi-driver was roughed up at a Tibetan settlement, allegedly by Muslim boys, during the Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations. Mohd Shafi, a Muslim activist, believes that the following day's violence was a reaction to this.

The Buddhists of Leh are agitated about the frequent attacks on their community at Kargil district, a predominantly Muslim area. But until now their anger was subdued because the majority Muslim community, the Shias, sided with them on all major issues. Interestingly, the Shias of Ladakh have found

more in common with the Buddhists than with the Muslims of the Valley, who are mostly Sunnis. For instance, the Shia leaders support the Buddhists against the Sunni antique-dealers, who the Buddhists charge with selling religious items, *thankas* (paintings, statuettes and musical instruments), to foreigners, at high prices.

According to Sazzad Hussain, an affluent hotelier of Leh, the Sunni Muslims of the Valley do not hesitate to sell religious artefacts to foreigners. The Shias of Ladakh, he says, understand the emotional value attached to these items because they have lived in the region for centuries. It was, in fact, with the help of the Shias that the sale of *thankas* and other items was banned in

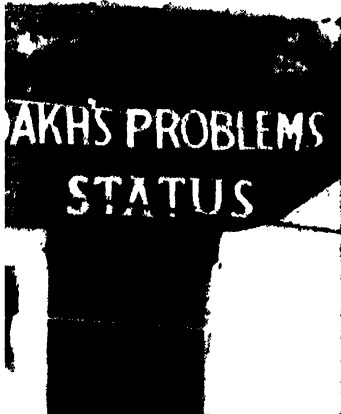
Ladakh in the early Eighties.

The feeling among the majority of Buddhists in Leh is that the National Conference (NC) government of Dr Farooq Abdullah has been discriminating against the Ladakhis—both Buddhists and Shias—in favour of the Sunni settlers from the Valley. It is true that the NC's base in Leh is limited to a few thousand Sunnis. Buddhists and Shias are still ardent supporters of the Congress.

Dr Abdullah's decision to nominate Amanullah Azad as the MLC of Leh was the proverbial last straw as far as the local populace was concerned, as the seat has always gone to a Buddhist in the past. Says Congress chief Akhoo Raza, who is also the president of Leh's Muslim Association, "The NC has created a communal wedge among the Ladakhis by depriving them of their rightful representation in the Legislative Council." Buddhist leader Jora, who is also the joint secretary of the district Congress unit, argues, "Even if Farooq was right in choosing a member of the minority community for the MLC's seat, it should have gone to the larger group of Shias and not the Sunnis." Says octogenarian Akhoo Raza, a Shia leader of Shey village, about 15 km from Leh, "The Sunni MLC's appointment led to the total alienation of the Buddhists from the NC government." Raza also claims that the Ladakh region has always been neglected by the ruling party.

Over 1,20,000 Buddhists of Leh and Kargil are extremely bitter about the fact that they have not been represented in the state Cabinet, which has members from all regions, castes and communities. Even the special ministry for

The Buddhists feel that the National Conference government of Farooq Abdullah has been discriminating against the Ladakhis. It has stoked the communal fire by siding with the Sunni settlers from the Kashmir Valley.



The Buddhists' agitation for Union Territory status for Ladakh; (below) a Shia leader, Akhsoon Raza: Ladakhis feel neglected



Ladakh affairs, which was created at Jawaharlal Nehru's initiative in the Sixties, is not headed by a Ladakhi, unlike in the past. It is common knowledge that the ministry has been virtually defunct since the Farooq government came to power. Says the local MLA, T. Samphel, "The state of the ministry is pathetic though it is directly under the chief minister's control, because he has little interest in the area." Another setback for the Ladakhis has been the scrapping of the Ladakh Development Board.

The people obviously feel threatened by such actions of the state government. Says Akbar Ladakhi, a retired civil servant and authority on the region's history and culture, "Farooq may not be communal, but he has the reputation of being an inefficient and ignorant chief minister in Ladakh." Akbar feels that to assuage the feelings of the Buddhists, the ministry for Ladakhi affairs should have been revived and put under the charge of a Ladakhi.

Instead, the state government has only stoked the communal fire in Ladakh by siding with the Sunni Muslims. The NC government's explanation that it is protecting the interests of a minority does not hold good in Kargil, where the Buddhists are in a minority. It is only natural then that the Buddhists face an identity crisis today. They feel that their ethnic identity is threatened by the Sunnis from the Valley.

ment against the Kashmiri settlers. One can see graffiti and posters in Leh and its nearby towns demanding that the Kashmiris go back. A large number of Muslims have moved from the outskirts of Leh to the city fearing a communal backlash. In Nubra and Khamti subdivisions, the Buddhists have driven out some Kashmiri shopkeepers in the past few weeks. A Kashmiri *dhaba*-owner in Khamti, about 100 km from Leh, does not have the courage to reopen his shop despite the administration's assurances of security. The majority community has also prevented a number of Kashmiri taxi-drivers from taking foreign tourists on sight seeing tours.

It is probably such anti-Kashmiri sentiments that have prompted the Buddhists to revive their agitation for Union Territory status for Ladakh and demand for the inclusion of its people among the Scheduled Tribes. A dozen Buddhists—mainly from the nearby villages—have been courting arrest daily to press for these demands. Significantly, the Congress leaders of Leh have been actively helping the Buddhist Association.

According to insiders, the Buddhist leadership is sure that its demand for Union Territory status for Ladakh will not be met. The main goal of the movement, according to some of its top leaders, is to persuade the government to set up a regional or hill council for the region on the lines of the Gorkha Hill Council of Darjeeling. Some of Ladakh's leaders have already established contact with the leader of the Gorkhaland agitation, Subash Ghisingh.

Farooq Abdullah: accused of discrimination

Communalism thus seems to be an extension of the Ladakhis' resentment.



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One can see graffiti and posters in Leh and its nearby towns demanding that the Kashmiris go back. The Ladakhis feel that their ethnic identity is threatened by the Sunni Muslims from the Valley

The politics of neglect

Ladakhis accuse the state government of not doing enough

Walled in on all sides by the giant mountain ranges of Zaskar, Ladakh and Karakoram, Leh has consistently eluded development. If the city has made any progress in the last decade, it is not because of any planned effort. An airport and basic roads have been constructed to enable the movement of army troops; hotels and markets have come up to cater to the tourists, who are attracted to Ladakh by its scenic beauty and remoteness. The state government has done nothing for the development of the region. An instance of its neglect is the Stakna Hydel project. Conceived more than 20 years ago at a cost of Rs 2.5 crores, the mini power plant (of only 4MW) has yet to be completed. More than Rs 25 crores has already been spent on the venture.

On an average, both Leh and Kargil get about three hours of electricity a day for two to five days a week. According to the locals, sometimes even the city centres are in total darkness for several days. The supply of drinking water is equally erratic. Long queues of men, women and children at the public taps are a daily sight. Water is sold in jerricans in Leh.

Given these conditions, it is surprising that agriculture is the main-

stay of the population in Leh and Kargil, which have almost no facilities for irrigation. The Igoo-Phey irrigation project—which is said to have the potential of transforming the rural economy of Ladakh—has already taken about a decade and it is likely to be many more years before it takes off. The Ladakhis grow wheat, barley or millet—newer crops or methods have not been introduced. Farmers are ignorant about double or multi-crops and things like fertilisers and hybrid seeds. As a result, a sprawling farm of about 20 acres fetches, on an average, about Rs 10,000 a year. The government has no plans to give subsidy to progressive farmers or

Leh has consistently eluded development. If the city has made any progress, it is not because of any planned effort

fruit-growers, as is done in the Kashmir Valley.

Ladakh has a very high density of illiterates and school drop-outs. One of the reasons is that there is no college in the entire region. The nearest college for the students of Leh is in Srinagar, more than 400 km away. To make matters worse, more than 150 posts of primary and secondary school teachers have been lying vacant for more than a year. In Kargil and Leh there is no institution for pursuing medical, engineering or any other vocational studies.

The NC government has always discriminated against Ladakh. While all other districts in the state are allotted funds on the basis of area, Leh and Kargil are given money on the basis of population. Says the region's MLA, T. Samphel, "They always find some way or the other to discriminate against Ladakh." For example, the state government hiked the funds allocated to all the districts when the Planning Commission increased J&K's share by 25 per cent, while many of the districts' shares increased by 25 per cent, Leh was given the minimum step-up—only 2 per cent—despite the fact that the district incurs the highest expenditure on overheads like transport, labour, etc.

The Ladakhis' demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status has got lost in the quagmire of bureaucratic procedures. Accepted on principle in the early Eighties by Indira Gandhi, it



A queue for water in Leh: a scarce commodity

was held up because it required a mini-census, which was conducted by the Registrar General of India in 1985-86. A team of anthropologists sent by the Centre also confirmed in 1986-87 that the Ladakhis deserved ST status. The file got stuck at various places in the home and social welfare ministries during the next two years. It was finally approved early this year. The case, in the first quarter of 1989, was then referred to the law ministry, which gave its consent, but sent the file back to the state government for its comments and perusal—a formality. The latest position is that the file is making its rounds of the state Cabinet and its various sub-committees. Ladakhis are apprehensive that the case may have to be examined afresh if the state government does not give the green signal soon.

The government's attitude is best reflected by a remark of public works minister and chief minister Farooq Abdullah's younger brother, Mustafa Kamal. When citizens complained that most of the Rs 47 lakhs given to Leh for flood and other relief was misappropriated by the officers and contractors of the Public Works Department (PWD), Kamal said: "Isn't it a good thing that some of you are getting richer?"

It is not surprising that the Ladakhis have launched a movement on the lines of the Gorkhaland agitation. After all, the two regions are alike in many respects. Firstly, the Ladakhis suffer from a similar identity crisis. Secondly, their resentment against the J&K government is comparable to that of the Gorkhas against the West Bengal government. Thirdly, their anti-Kashmiri sentiments resemble the Gorkhas' anti-Bengali feelings two years back. And lastly, the Ladakhis, like the Gorkhas, feel that their region has been neglected. The only difference is that the Ladakhis do not yet have a leader of Ghisingh's stature.

A study of the political implications of the movement suggests that both the NC and the Congress stand to gain by it. The NC can use it to strengthen its position by playing on the fears of the

Communal passions flare up in Leh every time there is an inter-community marriage, an event which was not considered unusual till a decade ago

Shia Muslims; while the Congress will naturally benefit from the Buddhists' fight against the NC. The two parties' interest in the agitation—or the lack of it—is particularly relevant against the backdrop of the coming elections. That is why, perhaps, neither the Centre nor the state government has attempted so far to hold negotiations with the Buddhist leadership.

But what is worrying is that unless the situation is tackled immediately, it will result in a deeper communal divide. The atmosphere is already so vitiated, says Akbar Ladakhi, that communal passions flare up in Leh every time there is an inter-community marriage, something which was not considered unusual till a decade ago. The leaders of the two communities are aggravating the crisis by their allegations. Rigzin Jora charges that the Buddhists are being paid to embrace Islam. "We are no longer going to take it lying down," he declares. Meerwaiz Nadvi contradicts Jora's claim and lists the rural Muslims who have been forcibly converted to Buddhism. The confrontationist attitude of the two leaders portends more violence in the coming months.

Thuptan, who has assumed the leadership of the Buddhist movement after giving up a job with All India Radio, believes that the agitation can be prevented from taking a communal turn. "There is no question of communal violence if the Muslims decide to support our movement," he says. However, there is an underlying threat in his words. "After all, every Ladakhi is going to be benefited by things like Scheduled Tribe status and development of the region," he says.

Some leaders of the Shia community share Thuptan's view. Says Kacho Nisar Hussain, president of the community's main organisation, Anjuman Imamia, "We have nothing to lose by supporting the Buddhists' demands." He feels that a majority of the Shia Muslims, who are mostly poor farmers, would benefit enormously by joining the movement for regional autonomy. "Why should we fight each other when our problems are the same?" he asks.

Says Balraj Puri, an authority on ethnic minorities in J&K, "The ultimate solution would be to accept their regional demands." But is encouraging regionalism the right way to counter communalism? While this is a matter for debate, there is little doubt that the government must deal with the situation politically—and quickly. Ladakh may not yet be a major problem, but it has all the makings of one.

Vipul Mudgal / Leh

THE PLOT

*Was there a contract to kill Nusli Wadia?
Or is his rival Dhirubhai Ambani the
victim of a frame-up?*

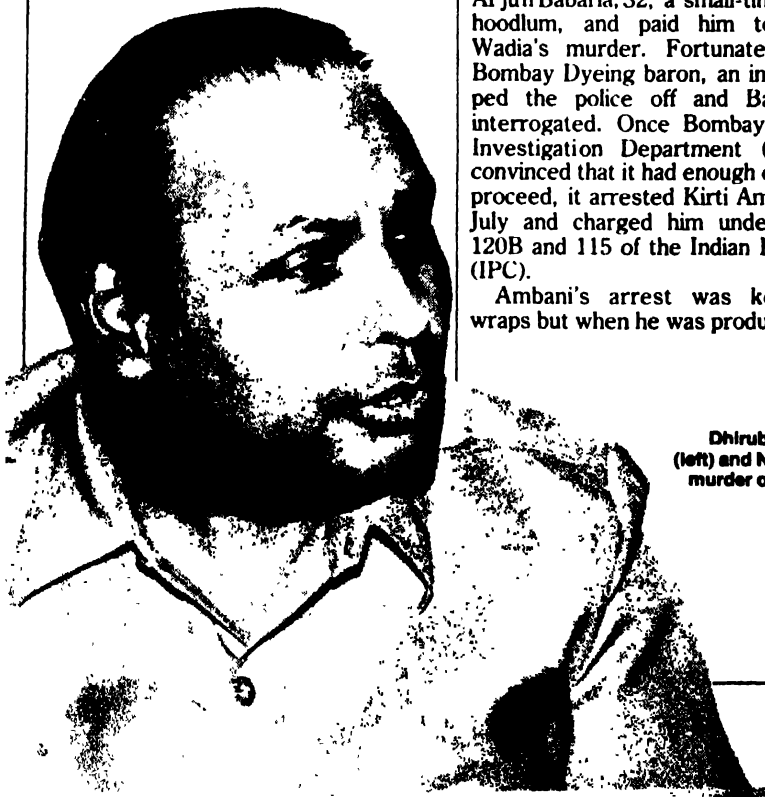
The plan, which was hatched sometime in November 1988, consisted of blocking the car of Nusli Wadia on way home from his office and gunning him down. Enquiries further revealed that the persons from underworld who were contacted by the men accused for executing the plan were provided with details like addresses, vehicle numbers, routes, photo clippings, etc. of Shri Nusli Wadia in order to enable them to execute the plan successfully... The evidence collected so far shows that it was hatched by an executive working under a textile tycoon to do away with another textile industrialist.

—Statement by Bombay CID to the metropolitan magistrate

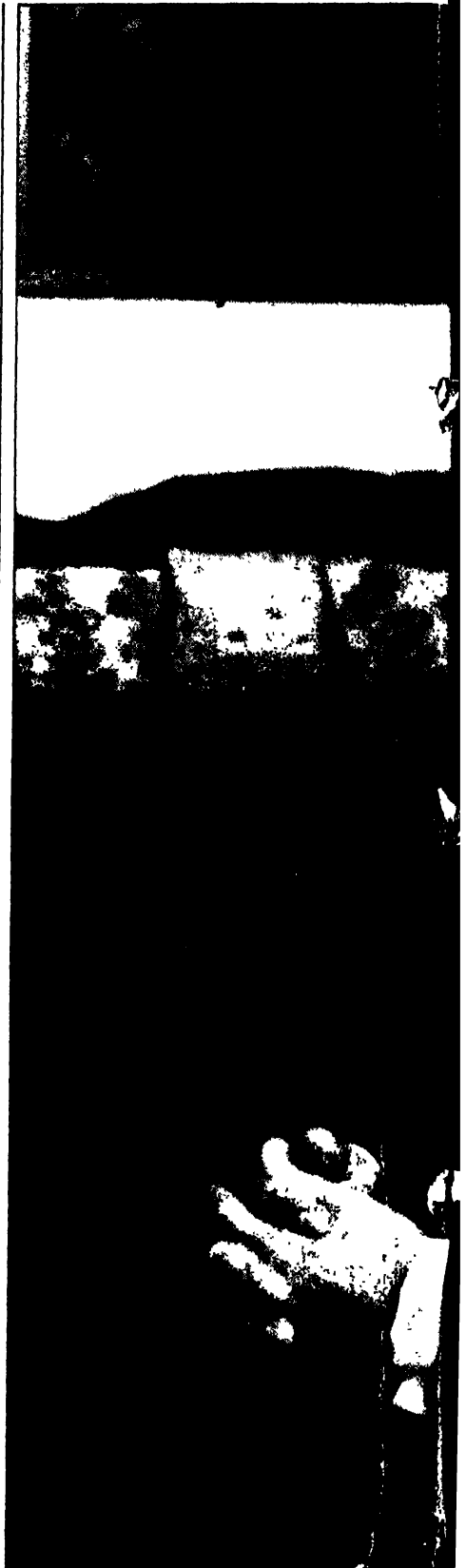
It was as though one best-seller had given way to another. For 12 years now, the rivalry between Dhirajlal H. (Dhirubhai) Ambani, the self-made, street-wise chairman of Reliance Industries, and Nusli Wadia, the patrician, Rugby-educated chairman of Bombay Dyeing, has seemed like a leaf out of Jeffrey Archer's *Kane And Abel*. But on 1 August, 1989, it appeared to have more in common with Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* than with Archer's relatively tame pot-boiler.

The way the Bombay police told it, the Ambanis of Reliance had decided to eliminate Wadia. Kirtibhai Ambani, 48, Reliance's general manager (public relations and coordination), had contacted Arjun Babaria, 32, a small-time Bombay hoodlum, and paid him to organise Wadia's murder. Fortunately for the Bombay Dyeing baron, an informer tipped the police off and Babaria was interrogated. Once Bombay's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) was convinced that it had enough evidence to proceed, it arrested Kirti Ambani on 31 July and charged him under Sections 120B and 115 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Ambani's arrest was kept under wraps but when he was produced before



Dhirubhai Ambani
(left) and Nusli Wadia:
murder or mischief?





the metropolitan magistrate at Bombay's Esplanade Court and remanded to police custody after being refused bail, the country sat up and took notice. Reporters crowded the courtroom and photographers clicked wildly as Ambani and Babaria, their faces covered by pieces of cloth, entered. By the evening, when the details of the arrests made first the Marathi news bulletin on Bombay Door-darshan and then the English news on the national network (but not the Hindi news), it was clear that something extraordinary had occurred.

Were the Ambanis really prepared to stoop to murder? Had the self-proclaimed street-fighters resorted to using the methods of the dingy alley? For a decade now, Wadia has claimed that Ambani is out to destroy him. From his perspective, here, at last, was proof.

The arrest and its aftermath raised other important questions as well. Conventional wisdom has it that Dhirubhai Ambani is the Congress(I) regime's favourite industrialist and that Nusli Wadia heads the government's hit-list. Yet, here was a Congress(I) state government accusing Reliance of plotting to murder Wadia. Even if this was attributed to Maharashtra chief minister Sharad Pawar's long-standing friendship with the Bombay Dyeing chief, how had news of the arrests made it to Doordarshan's national news? Did all this suggest some kind of estrangement between the Ambanis and the Gandhis?

Even as the nation pondered these questions, events moved with startling rapidity. On 3 August, only two days after the Bombay police had told the press that it had a cast-iron case against Kirti Ambani and Babaria, Sharad Pawar called a press conference. The case, he announced, required further investigations outside Maharashtra and it was impossible for the state police force to conduct these. Therefore, he was writing to the Centre to hand the entire case over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

On the face of it, Pawar's announcement was not unreasonable, but its implications were so startling that it provoked howls of outrage. For two years now, CBI director Mohan Katre has frequently been described by his detractors as an Ambani lackey, who has not only demolished the CBI's credibility in an effort to whitewash the Bofors affair for Rajiv but has also participated in a witch-hunt against Wadia. By handing the case over to an eager Katre, the state government was—at least in the eyes of the Wadia camp—copping out. The next day's *Indian Express* carried a

cartoon showing the CBI as Ambani's pet dog and Katre as a dinner-jacketed flunkey. The implication was clear: this was the end of the investigation. While the CBI protested that such imputations were malicious and unfair, the Bombay police appeared to share the *Express*' misgivings. Off the record, police officers warned that were Katre (who is lobbying for a third extension) to scupper the enquiry, they would leak the evidence they had collected.

Despite their anger, one message had got through. Regardless of what the arrests and the publicity afforded to



Ad for Arjun Babaria's band: drummed up charges?

them suggested, the Ambanis were not out of favour. When it came to the crunch, they still got what they wanted from New Delhi.

And if the dramatic arrests had handed Wadia a much-needed tactical victory, the decision to send for the

obliging Katre meant that round two had gone to Dhirubhai Ambani.

Over the last decade, the war between Ambani and Wadia has been conducted not on a battlefield but in a corridor of mirrors. Everything is open to question and nothing is but what is not. For every claim made by the Ambanis, Wadia produces hundreds of counter-claims. And every charge he hurls at them is reflected back from a new direction. Each side is obsessive about the other and both parties see conspiracies around every corner. In this welter of allegations, complaints and conspiracy theories, nothing is more elusive than the truth. All of Wadia's statements seem sound and convincing till the Ambanis explode them. And each of Ambani's arguments seems definitive till Wadia shows it to be a lie.

By the end of last week, it was clear that this case too had made its way to the wilderness of mirrors. As each side told its tale of woe, truth seemed to have been an early casualty. Finally, it boiled down to nothing more than who you chose to believe.

One thing, however, did go in Wadia's favour. Both he and the Bombay police told the same story: there had been a conspiracy to kill him.

There are many versions of what really happened, but SUNDAY'S sources

Pawar rules, OK?

How Maharashtra's strongman beat Dhirubhai Ambani at his own game

He is, without a doubt, the strongest Congress(I) chief minister in living memory. Last week, Sharad Pawar demonstrated once again the adroit mastery of political manipulation that has kept him three moves ahead of his opponents. It is well known that the Ambanis and Pawar are at loggerheads. Nor is it any secret that the fabled clout of the Reliance chieftains has failed to weaken Pawar's position. Rajiv Gandhi is convinced that he needs Pawar in place to win Maharashtra for the Congress(I) at the next election and so, will not touch him.

Nevertheless, Pawar needed to do two things. One, he had to serve notice to the Ambanis that he would not tolerate any more attacks on him. And two, he needed to establish his credentials with the Opposition in case it won the next election or if Rajiv threw him out once polling was over. The problem was: how could he achieve these objectives without destroying his equation with Rajiv?

In the murder case, he found the perfect solution. After okaying the arrest of Kirti Ambani, Pawar left Bombay for Sholapur and refused to take the Ambanis' calls. Twenty-four hours after Kirti was taken into custody, he met Mukesh Ambani (Dhirubhai was abroad) and promised to see what he could do. By forcing the Ambanis to supplicate before him, he established objective one: teaching them a lesson.

Objective two was easier to achieve. By daring to act against

Ambani, who is widely perceived to be above the law, he made it clear to the Opposition that he was no mere Rajiv *chamcha*, but his own man.

As for the danger that he might antagonise Rajiv in the bargain, Pawar was clever enough to agree to hand the case over to the CBI the moment Delhi made its request, though he did point out that this was a considerable climbdown for him and one he



Pawar is now in a position to threaten the Ambanis for life. Should they ever step out of line, all he has to do is leak the evidence collected by the Bombay police

agreed to only out of respect for Rajiv.

Best of all, he is now in a position to threaten the Ambanis for life. Should they ever step out of line, all he has to do is leak the evidence collected by the Bombay police and turn the murder case into an issue again!

This little stratagem probably makes him the only politician in Indian history to have beaten Dhirubhai Ambani at his own game.

suggest that the plot was unravelled as follows:

Late last year, a police team investigating a drug case raided Arjun Babaria. While Babaria is hardly in the Dawood Ibrahim class, he has had many brushes with the law and is described on police files as having accepted contracts for hits. During the raid, policemen came across diamonds estimated at Rs 15 lakhs. Naturally, they asked him where these came from. He replied, "Kirti Ambani."

An inspector then went to see Ambani. Had he lost some diamonds? Yes, he

said, they had been stolen a while ago. Why then had he not registered a police complaint? he was asked. He had meant to, he replied, but had been too busy. Would he like to file a complaint now? asked the policeman. Yes, said Ambani.

This complaint established that Babaria's diamonds have been claimed by Ambani and proved some kind of link.

Meanwhile, another police team was investigating a shoot-out on the Bombay-Pune road. During interrogation, one of the men involved in that incident turned informer. Seizing its opportunity, the police asked him if he had been offered any other job recently. He had, he said. Somebody had tried to recruit him for a hit on Wadia. Really? said the police sceptically, and who was that somebody? The answer was startling: Arjun Babaria.

The case then went to Arvind Inamdar, Bombay's highly regarded additional commissioner of police. Inamdar naturally put the two investigations together and got back to Babaria. Had Kirti Ambani asked him to kill Nusli Wadia? After some reluctance, Babaria confessed. He told the police that Ambani had been willing to pay Rs 50 lakhs for the hit and that an advance of Rs 20 lakhs had already been handed over; Rs 15 lakhs in diamonds and Rs 5 lakhs in cash.

The police recovered the cash, an AK-47 assault rifle, maps of the route followed by Wadia from his beach house in Prabhadevi to Bombay Dyeing's imposing office in Ballard Estate, pictures of Wadia, Kirti Ambani's calling-card and a revolver. According to Babaria, Ambani had asked him to put together a team that would ambush Wadia's car and then shoot him. (This is a fairly common style of killing in Bombay's underworld.) Babaria also claimed to have already approached some gangsters for the job.

What happened next is not clear, but Babaria seems to have agreed to cooperate with the police in trapping Ambani. During the hearing of Babaria and Kirti Ambani's bail applications, the police produced a cassette tape of a conversation between Ambani and Babaria in which, it said, coded references were made to the hit. Obviously, such a tape (the police is said to have others) could only have been recorded with Babaria's connivance.

In early July, chief minister Sharad Pawar was told about the plot. He informed Delhi and told the police to go ahead with its investigations. A senior inspector called on Wadia at his residence, told him his life was in danger, warned him not to use his own cars and informed him that two policemen would



The way the Bombay police told it, the Ambanis decided to eliminate Wadia. Kirtibhai Ambani, one of Reliance's general managers, is said to have paid a Bombay hoodlum to organise the murder

(Inset) Kirtibhai Ambani; being escorted to court: masterminded the plot?

accompany him at all times.

Wadia, who is now paranoid about government persecution, refused to accept that the police was telling the truth. He was convinced that this was a ploy to keep a watch on him at all times. He went to see Sharad Pawar who assured him that this was not the case, asked him to be exceedingly careful, but would not say more.

Despite Pawar's assurances, Wadia ignored his police escorts and on Monday, 24 July, gave them the slip and went off in his Range Rover to visit his lawyer Fali Nariman at the Oberoi Hotel. Later, he was told that this was the day of the hit, but that heavy rains and a

Nusli's India

Gucci loafers, imported steaks—yet Wadia would be happier with V.P. Singh

If the truth be told, the man Nush Wadia has most in common with is Rajiv Gandhi. Just as Rajiv is Jawaharlal Nehru's grandson, Wadia is Mohammed Ali Jinnah's. Both men were born to Parsi fathers. Both were academic disasters (Gandhi failed at Cambridge; Wadia never went to university) who joined the family business. Both are perceived as being haughty, aristocratic types who lack the common touch. Both speak Hindi badly and are more comfortable in English. Both like the good things in life, from Gucci loafers to imported steaks. And both are dismissed by their enemies as naive simpletons at sea in a world of manipulation and dirty tricks.

So why is Rajiv Gandhi's government working overtime to destroy Nush Wadia? And why are both men more comfortable with canny, earthy, unsophisticated allies: Rajiv with Dhirubhai Ambani and Wadia with

Ramnath Goenka?

Nush Wadia says he doesn't know. Rajiv Gandhi smiles enigmatically when asked about Wadia. And only their allies offer explanations. Dhirubhai Ambani says it is because Wadia conspired to topple Rajiv, while Ramnath Goenka attributes it to Rajiv's corrupt, unscrupulous nature.

But it wasn't always like this. There was a time when Wadia was, if not a friend, then a close acquaintance of Gandhi's. The two men met often, were on first name terms and did their best to help each other. It was Wadia who convinced die-hard RSS supporter Ramnath Goenka that Rajiv was the best thing to happen to India. And it was Gandhi who gave Nusli a licence to manufacture DMT, thus rescuing Bombay Dyeing from the brink of financial disaster.

Wadia first met Rajiv to ask for

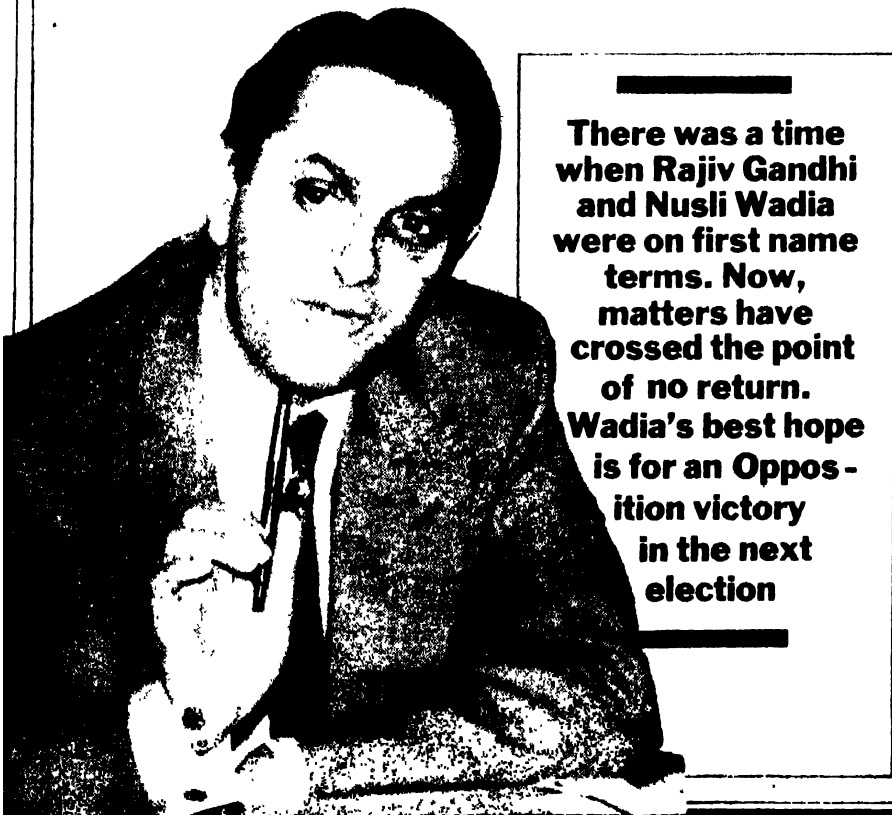
help with this DMT project. Though a letter of intent had been issued, the government now seemed on the verge of breaking with precedent and refusing Bombay Dyeing a licence. Desperate because several crores had already been invested in the plant, Wadia sought and was granted an appointment with Rajiv, who was then a mere MP. After hearing his story and sensing that the likes of Pranab Mukherjee and R.K. Dhawan were frustrating Wadia's plans, Rajiv cleared the project with his mother. Wadia got his licence and the foundation was laid for the prosperity that has seen Bombay Dyeing through the current crisis.

More than that, the two men found that they could relate to each other. They met often, sometimes in Rajiv's offices at Akbar Road and Motilal Nehru Marg and sometimes at home. When Mrs Gandhi was assassinated, on 31 October, 1984, and Rajiv took her place, it seemed as though a new era had dawned for Bombay Dyeing and Nush Wadia. Soon, Dhawan and Mukherjee were out and Rajiv appeared to disapprove of Dhirubhai Ambani, Wadia's great rival.

Even then, say Wadia's friends, Bombay Dyeing never got the advantages it was expected to because Ambani's grip on the administration was too strong. Wadia met Rajiv on at least four different occasions to get him to alter the duty structure on one of his raw materials. While Rajiv promised action each time, the bureaucracy frustrated his endeavours. It was only after Wadia expressed his despair in strong terms that Rajiv sent him to finance minister V.P. Singh who finally took the necessary action.

Nevertheless, the government did cooperate in a Wadia-Goenka campaign against Reliance. S. Gurumurthy, the *Express*' financial investigator, was given classified documents by Mohammed Yunus and revenue secretary Vinod Pande, and enforcement director Bhure Lal worked in concert with the *Express*. By 1986, when Dhirubhai Ambani had a stroke, it seemed as though the tables had turned: after years of being the instigator of official persecution, Ambani was now at the receiving end.

Nobody is sure how involved Rajiv Gandhi was in all this. The *Express* claims the entire campaign had his



There was a time when Rajiv Gandhi and Nusli Wadia were on first name terms. Now, matters have crossed the point of no return. Wadia's best hope is for an Opposition victory in the next election

blessings (if not his active cooperation) and that he used terms like "mafioso" to describe Ambani. Certainly, there can be no doubt that V.P. Singh's finance ministry all but joined hands with Bombay Dyeing and the *Indian Express*.

In early 1987, when Ambani seemed on the edge of bankruptcy, he suddenly pulled off an amazing coup. CBI director Mohan Katre gave the government a letter apparently written by a Gordon McKay of Fairfax, an American detective agency, to Gurumurthy. The letter referred to an ongoing investigation of the Bachchans and became the centrepiece of a conspiracy theory floated by the Ambanis. According to this theory, Wadia, Goenka and V.P. Singh were working together to dig up dirt on Rajiv and his friends. When the evidence was uncovered, V.P. Singh would topple Rajiv and take his place.

Wadia has always maintained that this was rubbish. Goenka and he were fighting Ambani, not Gandhi. Yes, Fairfax had been retained, but it was asked to investigate Reliance, not Bachchan. (Wadia is somewhat circumspect about his own role in the hiring of Fairfax.) The letter to Gurumurthy was an obvious forgery.

Nevertheless, Rajiv bought the conspiracy theory. Wadia rushed to Delhi to explain his position and was given a dressing down by Gopi Arora, then Rajiv's special secretary. He was finally granted an appointment with Rajiv but this was cancelled at the last moment. He petitioned V. George, Rajiv's personal secretary, and got a second appointment, only to find it cancelled again. Since then, he has never met Rajiv.

As for the conspiracy theory, even if it was false, it became self-fulfilling. Rajiv never trusted V.P. Singh again and, soon enough, the Raja resigned and became his main opponent. The *Express* swung its weight behind him and Wadia was identified with their cause. The Bachchans and the Ambanis became friends and in the space of a year, Dhirubhai Ambani had acquired even more clout than he had in the Dhawan-Pranab Mukherjee era.

Wadia seems to think it was a misunderstanding; till recently, he refused to believe that Rajiv knew the details of the manner in which he was being persecuted. Now, he is less sure.



Ramnath Goenka and
Bombay's Express Towers:
pressing Wadia's case

hurricane led the assassins to scrap their plans. Nevertheless, the police scoured the city frantically looking for him and Pawar phoned to scold him for his carelessness.

He heard nothing more about the threats till a week later when the police picked up Ambani. He was shocked to learn that the Ambanis had been prepared to go so far. But by then, the police had recovered Kirti Ambani's diary which included details of the payments made to hit-men.

In fact, say police sources, they were confident that Ambani would crack in jail and tell them the full story. It was this prospect that frightened Reliance so much that the obliging Katre was asked to scurry over and take charge without further delay.

The Wadia camp's version seems plausible enough and the fact that the police support it gives this account a certain credibility. After all, goes the

**Says Anil Ambani,
"They needed to find
someone with the
surname Ambani. He
(Kirtibhai) is not a
relative but all
Reliance employees
are Ambanis"**



argument, this is the *Bombay* police we are talking about—the best force in India—not the Haryana police or the Bihar police (or even the CBI...).

The Ambanis, however, reject it entirely. Offered the option of disowning Kirti Ambani and claiming that he was acting on his own, they have chosen to back him all the way. The day after the arrest, Reliance issued a statement denouncing the charges as a frame-up and conspiracy to malign the company. They made it clear that while Ambani is no relative (he changed his last name from Shah), he is a valued employee.

"It is a convenient way of picking on his last name," Anil Ambani told *SUNDAY*. "They needed to find somebody with the surname Ambani. He is not a blood relative but as far as we are concerned, all 58,000 employees of the Reliance group are Ambanis. And so are the five million investors. They are all part of the Reliance family and we stand by each one of them."

The bravado was backed by a profound scepticism about the Wadia/Bombay police version. The Ambanis dismissed the story about the diamonds and defied anybody to produce proof. All the police had to link Kirti Ambani to Arjun Babaria, they said, was Kirti's calling-card which Babaria possessed; Kirti's diary, which contained no incriminating entries; an old photograph showing Babaria with Kirti at a public function; and a cassette tape provided by Babaria himself, the authenticity of which was highly questionable. As for Babaria's so-called confession, statements made to the police are inadmissible in court and they doubted very much that once he was out of police custody and far from the third degree, he would back the police version.

Besides, they argued, even if it could

"There must have been a conspiracy"

Nusli Wadia on the plot to kill him

Nusli Wadia, the embattled chairman of Bombay Dyeing, has seen his life change because of the war with Reliance. But on the record, he remains circumspect and unwilling to speak his mind. He rarely gives interviews and prefers to let his lawyers do the talking.

He did agree to talk to SUNDAY, but was only slightly less circumspect than usual.

SUNDAY: Do you believe there was a conspiracy to murder you?

Nusli Wadia: There must have been. The Maharashtra police would not have taken this action on their own. They must have found enough evidence.

Do you think the Ambanis were behind it?

I really don't know. All I have to go by is what the press tells me.

Is it true that there were threats against your sons' lives?

Yes, at least that's what the Himachal police told me. I got a letter from them telling me about the threats. My sons were given police protection and I subsequently withdrew them from boarding school in Himachal.

Is it also true that the CBI has been checking up on one of your sons now that he has joined St Xavier's College in Bombay?

Yes. I know that somebody from the CBI visited the college and asked about him.

What interest does the CBI have in him?

I think you had better ask the CBI that question.

Do you now believe that the Ambanis were behind the threats against your family?

It's difficult to say. How do I know?

Do you feel that your present troubles—the visa case, government persecution, etc.—have been instigated by the Ambanis?

I do know that the Ambanis have not been very happy with me. But that by itself does not mean that the government is doing it at their instance.



Do you agree with the Maharashtra government's decision to hand the case over to the CBI?

It's the Maharashtra government's decision, not mine.

No, but surely you are entitled to your own views on the subject.

I have nothing to say.

To put it another way, as the apparent victim of this alleged conspiracy, do you feel safer now that the matter is in Katre's hands?

Well, it's not Mr Katre but the CBI as a body that is involved. And all I can say is that I've experienced the CBI prosecuting me. And I hope that they will equally protect me.

Did you know about the suit fought by Ram Jethmalani against handing the case over to the CBI?

I had heard rumours and some lawyers connected to the PUCL (People's Union of Civil Liberties) had approached me and asked me to become a party to the case. I refused.

Was it the Jethmalanis who approached you?

No, it wasn't Jethmalani at all. It was other lawyers. But I have nothing to do with this case.

Anyhow, are you pleased that the judge ruled against handing the case over to the CBI?

I have no feelings on the matter.

Why not? As the apparent victim, surely you must care.

I have no comment to make.

be proved that Kirti Ambani knew Babaria, this proved nothing. It is no crime to meet a hoodlum (after all, most industrialists with union problems know the odd goonda); the police must prove that Kirti paid him to kill Wadia. And that, said the Ambanis, was far from established.

The Reliance camp had two other objections. They were:

- If they were to hire a hit-man, would they find a small-time mobster like Babaria whose principal business consists of running a wedding band? Wouldn't they be more professional in their approach?

- Why would they want to kill Wadia? According to the *Express*, they are behind the campaign of persecution that has Wadia on the run. What do they have to gain from killing him when he has already ceased to be a threat to them? In fact, if anything happened to Wadia, the Ambanis would at once be blamed and fall into disrepute.

Assuming that the Ambanis' objections held up, why then were they being accused of murder by the Bombay police? The Reliance camp had its own explanation. It is no secret that Sharad Pawar and the Ambanis do not get on. It is also believed that the family has complained to Delhi about Pawar's alleged involvement in land scams. Clearly, the powerful chief minister has no reason to like either Dhirubhai or his sons.

Reliance sources frequently point to Pawar's links with Nusli Wadia: the two men have been friends for years and still meet socially. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect Pawar to want to help Wadia and 'fix' Ambani. Moreover, suggest friends of the Ambanis, Pawar is now coming to terms with the fact that Rajiv might lose the next election. What better way of forging links with the Opposition in general and the *Express* camp in particular than by taking on Dhirubhai Ambani?

The way the Ambanis tell it, the whole case is a frame-up engineered by Wadia's friends in the *Indian Express* (chiefly financial adviser S. Gurumurthy) in concert with Pawar. They make the following points:

- P.R. Vakil, who appeared for the CID, has done so before for the Wadia-Express camp. Further, it is alleged, he was at Express Towers on the day of the hearing. (This is denied by the Wadia camp.)

- Jamnadas Moḍrani, a Wadia associate of long-standing, phoned the press about Kirti Ambani's arrest. How did he know?

- S. Gurumurthy turned up at the magistrate's court along with the pro-

secutors and seemed to be part of the police team.

- In a few weeks, Larsen and Toubro, an Ambani company, will launch the country's largest public issue, worth Rs 920 crores. The last time the Ambanis planned an issue (the Reliance Petrochemicals issue, worth Rs 518 crores), the Wadia camp tried various spoiling tactics. This time, they've cooked up a murder charge to sabotage the issue.

- Nusli Wadia is fighting for an Indian visa. He needs a case against the Ambanis to earn public sympathy for himself.

- With an election coming up, the Opposition needs a good issue. It is ideal to frame the Ambanis on a murder charge and then claim that Rajiv Gandhi has links with mafia types.

Nevertheless, say the Ambanis, it won't work. They will fight to establish Kirti's innocence and expose the conspiracy against them.

Regardless of which side is telling the truth, there is little doubt the affair marks a new low in Indian business history. If the Ambanis did actually try to kill Wadia, then this suggests that all the rumours about them are true, after all. And if the Wadia camp has framed an innocent man for murder, then this too marks a descent to hitherto unexplored levels of disgraceful behaviour.

Strangest of all is that the story should have broken only a month after newspapers and magazines speculated that a truce had been arranged between the warring factions. According to this view, Wadia, beaten and tired, had decided to sue for peace and the magnanimous Ambanis had agreed to bury the hatchet. Now, each side accuses the other of planting the stories. The Bombay Dyeing camp says that the Ambanis were busily trumpeting a *rapprochement* so that when Wadia was killed, they could claim that they had nothing to gain from the murder, while the Ambanis say that Wadia wanted to project himself as the underdog suing for peace to prepare the ground for the frame-up.

Judging by the way the protagonists in this battle reacted last week however, the bitterness still runs deep and this will be a fight to the finish. The Wadia camp does not regard the Ambanis as businessmen; the *Express* has frequently claimed that Ambani runs his mills at a loss but cooks the books and makes his money from excise evasion. The Bombay Dyeing perception of the Ambanis is that they are gangsters who use Reliance to attain a veneer of respectability and manipulate the media to hype up their essentially fraudulent claims. According to this view, a history of cri-

minality runs through the Ambani record and murder is the logical next step. Some instances:

- During the Reliance-Orkay feud, Kapil Mehra's son Pankaj was kidnapped in Patalganga, on the outskirts of Bombay, where the Reliance plant is located. He was found several hours later, badly beaten up.

- An associate of Wadia's (who asked SUNDAY not to name him) was attacked by goondas with swords and knives four years ago and then left for dead. He survived but still bears the scars and remains an implacable opponent of the Ambanis.

- During the Fairfax controversy, the Ambanis forged a letter from the detective agency to Gurumurthy and planted it on Mohan Katre.

- Three years ago, Nusli Wadia was asked to withdraw his sons from Lawrence School, Sanawar, by the state police because of death threats. As Pun-

jab terrorists are unlikely to regard the Wadia children as prime targets, there is only one conclusion to be drawn as to who was responsible for the threats. Recently, one of Wadia's sons returned from Millfield School in England and joined Bombay's St Xavier's College. In a matter of weeks, a CBI official had turned up at the college to ask questions about the boy.

- R.V. Pandit, publisher of *Imprint* and godfather to Wadia's children, attacked the Ambanis in his magazine. He began to receive threats and get abusive phone calls late every night. Finally, he suspended publication of *Imprint* and stopped going to his Cuffe Parade office. "I now suspect that the Ambanis were behind the threats," he says.

- Last year, somebody opened an account in Dubai in the name of the actress Tina Munim and then tipped off the Enforcement Directorate. At the time, Rajesh Khanna, a former lover,



Mohan Katre with Rajiv Gandhi: the Centre would like him to handle the case

For two years now, CBI director Mohan Katre has frequently been described by his detractors as an Ambani lackey. By handing the case over to him, the state government was—in the eyes of the Wadia camp—copping out

was thought to be responsible, but now the Ambanis are prime suspects because of Munim's affair with a member of the family.

The Wadia camp offers several other illustrations (all of them, incidentally, dismissed by the Ambanis as being the creations of a paranoid mind) to back up its assertion that the Ambanis are mafia types, not legitimate businessmen. Wadia's friends point to the destruction of Kapil Mehra's empire and the current campaign against Manu Chhabria to demonstrate that for Ambani, it is not enough to be successful; it is as important that everybody else is seen to fail.

The murder conspiracy, they argue, must be seen against this background. Even though they have ground Wadia down, the Ambanis are now manipulat-

ing the government to have him expelled from India. (Wadia is a British passport holder.) Their clout within Indian industry stems from their perceived omnipotence. Wadia's failure to bite the dust (despite everything, Bombay Dyeing still has a higher share price than Reliance) and his ability to fight back (with more than a little help from the *Express*) against the might of Reliance and the Government of India is a slap in Ambani's face. He *has* to be taught a lesson: hence the contract on him.

Such a view seems harsh, fanciful even—after all, Ambani heads India's third largest industrial empire—but there is little doubt that those at the helm at Bombay Dyeing and the *Indian Express* sincerely believe it.

They are less sure about the secret behind what they see as Ambani's hold on the government. Why should Rajiv Gandhi sanction the persecution of Bombay Dyeing, thereby fighting Dhurubhai



The Ambanis have little doubt that Wadia is in cahoots with the Opposition. How, they ask, can such a man claim to be a mere businessman with no interest in politics?

Ambani's battle for him? Wadia's friends believe that Ambani has convinced the government that, firstly, Wadia has gathered some secret information from Fairfax's Michael Hershman and that, secondly, he runs the *Indian Express*

from behind the scenes. Destroy Wadia and you scotch the Fairfax threat and finish off the *Express*—that at least is the argument.

Wadia is the first to claim that this is rubbish: Hershman found out a lot about Ambani, but he was never asked to investigate Rajiv Gandhi or Amitabh Bachchan, so there are no explosive revelations forthcoming. As for the *Indian Express* connection, Wadia is categorical: he has a close personal relationship with Ramnath Goenka, but does not run the *Express*. Nor is he going to inherit it. *Express* sources claim that over a year ago, Goenka transferred control of the paper to his family. Vivek Khaitan, his grandson, *already* owns 51 per cent of the *Express*. Another grandson, Manoj Santholia, owns 25 per cent and the remaining 24 per cent has been distributed among other members of the family.

Further, insists Wadia, he is no V.P. Singh loyalist out to destroy Rajiv Gan-

For some years now, Nusli Wadia has been accused of seeing everything that happens to him from the perspective of a conspiracy theory: every customs case, every duty rise and every licence refusal is described as an Ambani plot. There is a certain irony in the fact that this time, it is the Reliance camp that is screaming conspiracy. According to the Ambanis, the case against Kirti Ambani is a frame-up designed to embarrass them.

Who would participate in such a conspiracy? Easy, say the Ambanis: Sharad Pawar, Nusli Wadia and the 'RSS-Express gang', a description that includes Ramnath Goenka, S. Gurumurthy, Ram Jethmalani, A.G. Kulkarni MP (whose brother works for Bombay Dyeing), lawyer S.R. Vakil and publisher R.V. Pandit.

And why would they cook up a murder case? That too, explain the Ambanis, is easy. Larsen and Toubro has a massive public issue coming up and all the Nusli men want to sabotage it.

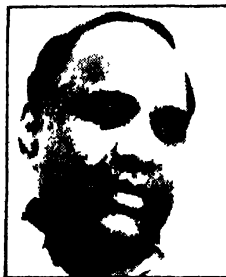
As with Wadia's own conspiracy theory, every new development in the case is made to fit into this analysis. On Monday, 7 August, 1989, Ram Jethmalani moved the Bombay courts on behalf of Anil Ghote, a journalist with the *Express* group. Arguing that his litigation was in the public interest, Jethmalani asked the court to stay the transfer

All the Nusli men?

The conspiracy as the Ambanis see it

of the case to the CBI from the Bombay police. Claiming that the CBI would scupper the investigation, Jethmalani alleged a political conspiracy to obstruct the course of justice. The court upheld part of Jethmalani's case and granted the stay till the next day. Further it demanded that all records of the case be produced before it.

To the Ambanis, the case is proof that the attempted murder charge arises from a conspiracy by all the Nusli men. If it was only a simple police matter, they say, then why did the Jethmalanis and the *Express* have to get in on the act? And why are they so keen to keep the investiga-



(L to r) Sharad Pawar, Ramnath Goenka, S. Gurumurthy and Ram Jethmalani: conspirators?

tion under Sharad Pawar's control? Could it be because they know that Pawar's police will serve up the conclusions they require.

As for motive, the Ambanis have no doubt that the Nusli men want to sabotage their issue. They claim that while Wadia gives the impression of being a simpleton who was quietly minding his own business till the Ambanis began to persecute him, his friends have, in fact, actively conspired to damage Reliance's prospects. They offer details of law suits filed before each Reliance public issue.

Some instances:

F Series debentures

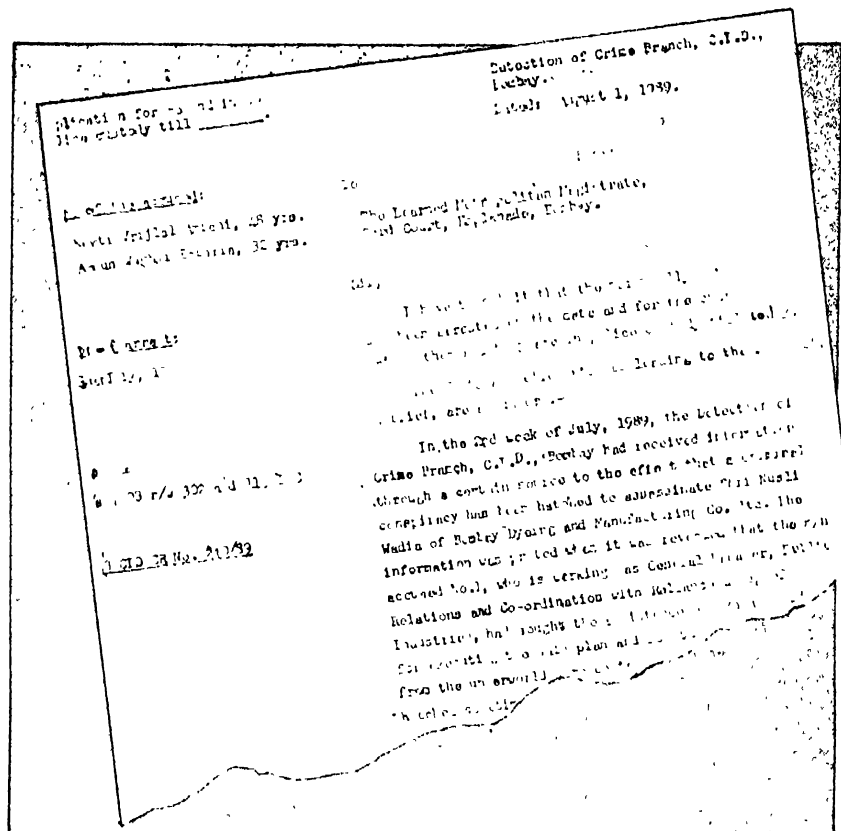
- An O.P. Arora filed a petition in the Supreme Court, which directed on 21 March, 1986, that it be filed in a High Court.
- The Delhi High Court dismissed

Who would participate in a conspiracy against the Ambanis? According to them, Sharad Pawar, Nusli Wadia and the 'RSS-Express gang'

dhi for political gain. He hardly knows the Raja and the first time he met him, it was Rajiv who effected the introduction. The trouble, say Wadia's friends, is that the Ambanis, through such friends as the obliging Mohan Katre, have convinced the Prime Minister that Wadia is the lynchpin of a conspiracy to oust him. And a panicky regime has bought this line.

The Ambanis laugh away Wadia's protestations. They have little doubt that he is in cahoots with the Opposition. They allege that he has advanced money to Goenka to keep the *Express* going; insist that he discovered Hershman; claim that he has close links with V.P. Singh; and point to the fact that among his lawyers is Ram Jethmalani, who has made a career out of abusing Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi. How, they ask, can such a man claim to be a mere businessman with no interest in politics?

Unfortunately for Wadia, it is the Ambani view that prevails in Delhi,



The CID's remand application: the magistrate refused bail



the petition as withdrawn on 15 July, 1986.

G Series debentures

- P. Murli Krishna moved the Andhra Pradesh High Court, which granted an injunction. Reliance moved the Supreme Court in December 1980 to get it dismissed.
- An Arun Kumar Jagoo moved the civil judge in Kanpur to challenge the issue. He also moved the civil judge in Bombay. Both moves failed.
- A Deepak J. Shah moved the Gujarat High Court, which rejected his petition.

Rights shares

- Deepak Shah also moved the Gujarat High Court in 1987 to challenge the early conversion of Reliance debentures. The case was dismissed in November 1987.
- Ratilal Trimbadia, Bikhabhai Rabari and Ashok Bhatt moved the High Court in Bombay to challenge the preponement of the date of conversion of debentures. The suit was dismissed on 15 October, 1987.

where ministers and officials make no distinction between Bombay Dyeing and the *Indian Express*. For all of last week, the powers that be in the capital scoffed at the Bombay police's allegations and regarded the case as an attempt to frame Ambani. The decision to put the obliging Katre on the job was taken at the highest level and communicated to Sharad Pawar, first by Buta Singh (who allegedly asked if it was possible to burn the *panchnama* and say the whole thing was a mistake) and then by R.K. Dhanwan on behalf of the Prime Minister. (For the record, Pawar told the press—without much conviction—that there was no pressure from Delhi.)

Obviously, Rajiv Gandhi realises that a very public trial of Kirti Ambani will do little to advance the Congress(I)'s prospects in the general election. As more and more details of the plot are divulged, the case could remain in the headlines for months, thereby drawing attention to the regime's close links with Reliance. Therefore, it is in both Rajiv and Dhirubhai's interests to bury the matter.

But where does that leave the truth? Last week, the Bombay police's Arvind Inamdar was still assuring the press that he had a cast-iron case and would not have dared to proceed against such influential people if he was less than sure of his facts. No doubt, the CBI will soon pour cold water on Inamdar's claims but

even so, it is too late to deny the public the facts.

And though the Ambanis had lost none of their swagger as they insisted last week that nobody believed the charges, there were very real fears that the allegations had seriously dented their image. Even allowing for Pawar's friendship with Wadia, there was some scepticism about the Ambani claim that the police was part of some Bombay Dyeing-led conspiracy and had cooked up a murder charge.

On the other hand, past experience shows that regardless of how much mud is thrown at the Ambanis, none of it ever sticks. Public issues continue to be over-subscribed and the ever resourceful Dhirubhai always bounces back into the affections of those in power. The Reliance camp seemed confident that this time too that old black magic would cast its spell and that the public, bemused by the allegations and counter-allegations in this wilderness of mirrors, would soon lose interest in the details of the case. And as for the *Express*, perhaps, it was better to have a battered Bombay Dyeing than a Wadia dead.

Whether Ambani's confidence was misplaced was still not clear. At this stage of the saga, only the likes of Mario Puzo would know what happens next.

Vir Sanghvi with reports from Olga Telles/Bombay

Liquor is quicker

The Karnataka Governor places the liquor trade under state control. Is it a move to embarrass and expose Ramakrishna Hegde?

On the face of it, the decision was routine and non-controversial. On 29 July, Karnataka Governor P Venkatasubbaiah issued a preliminary notification saying that the state administration—Karnataka is under President's Rule for the last three months—had decided to set up a state-owned monopoly to handle the distribution of Indian made liquor (IML) and beer in Karnataka. The notification added that the decision was taken to stop the rampant sale of non-duty paid liquor, known locally as 'seconds', which was causing loss to the state exchequer. Later, at a press conference the Governor justified the move: "During the last few years the sale of 'seconds' has reached alarming proportions. It is a great corruption of great magnitude." Only then was it clear that the Governor was referring to the unholy nexus between the state's powerful liquor barons and the previous Opposition governments of Ramakrishna Hegde and S.R. Bommai.

That P. Venkatasubbaiah's move may have had a political dimension was suggested a few days later. On 31 July, the deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, Najma Heptullah, asked the finance ministry to probe allegations made by ruling party members in the House about a Rs 300-crore scandal involving the Karnataka government when Ramakrishna Hegde was the chief minister. The stand taken by Heptullah came as a surprise to the Opposition as the allegations had been made without the chair having permitted the matter to be raised. When Opposition members protested, Najma Heptullah shot back: "Do you want tax evaders to go scot free?"

In the Lok Sabha, too, Ramakrishna Hegde came under fire. While presenting the Karnataka budget for 1989-90 in Parliament, Ajit Panja, the minister of state for revenue, took a dig at the Janata Party: "Apparently there had been a large-scale evasion of state excise duty on liquor...this does not speak well of the health of the fiscal system in Karnataka under the Janata government.."

It was by now amply evident that the Congress(I) was raking up the past not only to embarrass Hegde but the Opposition as a whole. More important, the ruling party was bent on preventing the flow of funds from the liquor barons to the Opposition.

While the liquor lobby has not yet reacted officially to Governor Venkatasubbaiah's notification, individual liquor tycoons are gearing up for the battle ahead. The Liquor Manufacturers Association (LMA), is working out a joint strategy to counter the Governor's action. Even as the Governor issued the notification, representatives of the LMA rushed to New Delhi to lobby in the corridors of power.

The ruling Congress(I)'s eagerness to break the liquor industry-Opposition nexus in an election year is understandable. The liquor lobby in Karnataka has traditionally contributed liberally to the party coffers of both the Opposition and the Congress(I). Says a former minister of the Ramakrishna Hegde cabinet: "One particular liquor group in Bangalore spends around Rs 2 lakhs every day on public relations." And the exercise mostly includes attending to ministers, senior party officials and friendly bureaucrats. "On any given day there could be hundreds of cars running

That the Governor's move may have had a political dimension was suggested when Congress(I) members of the Rajya Sabha demanded a probe into Ramakrishna Hegde's liquor connections



Governor P. Venkatasubbaiah (right) with Bommai: cracking down on the liquor barons

around. During elections, the liquor group provides the major political parties with transport and even cash," the minister confided.

Often, liquor barons make no secret of their political ambitions and affiliations. Take the case of the Khoday group, the liquor giant from Bangalore. The group's director, Hari Khoday is a Congress(I) sympathiser and he even lobbied for a party ticket during the last general elections. He also organised a massive yagna in New Delhi in 1987 to help the Prime Minister overcome his troubles. But the chairman of the group, Ramachandra Khoday, is a close friend of Ramakrishna Hegde. With enormous funds at its disposal, the liquor barons in Karnataka have traditionally helped both the Opposition and the Congress(I) but after Ramakrishna Hegde came to power, he took a number of steps and weaned away a number of Congress(I) barons to his fold.

For one, the Hegde government allowed arrack contractors to run up debts upto Rs 60 crores. Various reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), Public Accounts Committee and the Corps of Detectives (COD) pointed to misuse of rectified spirit allotted to industrial units. The number



It was felt that the Congress(I) was raking up the past not only to embarrass Ramakrishna Hegde but the Opposition as a whole

of alcohol-based chemical units in the state shot up from a modest 29 during Gundu Rao's regime to a staggering 87 last year. The quantity of rectified spirit allotted to these units simultaneously rose from 46 lakh litres to more than 120 lakh litres. A COD investigation followed by an expert committee probe into the issue revealed that a large number of the industries could not account for the proper utilisation of the rectified spirit

allotted to them. It was implied that the spirit was being diverted to produce 'seconds'. (Rectified spirit is the basic raw material for Indian made liquor (IML) and arrack.)

Moreover, it was during the Janata government's tenure that wineshops and bars mushroomed throughout the state. According to excise commissioner K.M. Ponnappa, there are over 5,000 wineshops, bars and clubs selling liquor in Karnataka. During Gundu Rao's regime the figure stood at 2,000. The Hegde government at that time was accused of handing out licences indiscriminately to liquor shops and alcohol-based chemical units to Janata Party sympathisers. It was alleged that the sons of J.H. Patel, Hegde's Cabinet colleague, had bagged the licences for two such chemical units.

That all the dealings of the Hegde government were not above board was revealed during a raid on the premises of Trishul Chemical Industries in Bangalore by the COD. The report of the investigation agency said: "It is evident that a considerable quantity of rectified spirit was being smuggled out of the unit for being transported unauthorisedly outside the state. This could not have been possible without the connivance of the excise inspector posted at the unit." The Public Accounts Committee of the state legislature expressed a similar fear in its

report last year: "The excise commissioner also admitted that the officers stationed at chemical units have not sent any report so far indicating any misuse of rectified spirit...It evidently means that officers are also conniving with the industries."

The curious fact is that the phenomenal rise in alcohol-based chemical units in the state was not matched by a corresponding increase in the manufacture of rectified spirit. The manufacture of rectified spirit in the state is wholly dependent on molasses. From 1978 to 1986, the production of molasses had actually decreased. When the Public Accounts Committee checked on the details of molasses distilled and rectified spirit obtained for six years from 1981, it found that "the yield of rectified spirit exceeded the norms in 1981-82 and 1982-83". But there was shortfall after the Hegde government took over. The total loss of revenue was estimated at Rs 37 crores from low yield of rectified spirit. When the committee wanted an explanation, the excise commissioner reportedly stated that "he would not like to offer any explanation in the matter"

The committee also came down heavily on the Hegde government for handing out licences indiscriminately to alcohol-based chemical units. "The increase in the number of alcohol-based industries during the period 1982-83 to 1985-86 is abnormal, the allotment of rectified spirit to them showing phenomenal increase. The policy followed is detrimental to the revenue of the state..."

But Governor Venkatasubbaiah's recent move is meant to strike at the roots of the illegal 'seconds' business which is rampant in the state. Hegde allowed the indiscriminate export of rectified spirit manufactured in Karnataka to other states, arguing that it will fetch additional revenue. But what unscrupulous liquor traders did was to bring back the spirit exported to manufacture 'seconds', which is exempt from a number of taxes. Says a former Janata Party minister: "The profits from 'seconds' is mindboggling."

But it is the timing of the Governor's notification which has raised suspicions that the real intention of the move is to embarrass Hegde and by extension, the Janata Dal. Or else why would the Governor take more than three months to realise that liquor barons were cheating the exchequer? More important, why did the Congress(I) rake up the issue at a time when the ruling party members were on the defensive over the CAG report on Bofors?

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore



Ramakrishna Hegde: under fire

Devi Lal and sons

The Haryana chief minister finds himself in difficult company

Haryana chief minister Devi Lal is in a bit of a dilemma. Though his eldest son, Om Prakash Chauthala, is his favourite, he cannot always take his side in his squabbles with younger brother, Ranjit Singh. Besides, though Lal does not mind Chauthala projecting himself as his successor, he has no intention of abdicating in his favour—not at present, anyway. He cannot bear the thought of becoming a political non-entity. He loves his sons, but feels threatened by them. Nor does he know how to deal with their clashing ambitions. And when he tries to assert himself, he fails.

No wonder his recent decision to ask for the resignations of seven of his ministers on 28 July was not taken very seriously. It was not hard to guess that after fuming and fretting for a few days, Devi Lal would eventually back down and the resignation drama would come to an end. And this is exactly what happened. On 30 July, Devi Lal announced that he would not accept the resignations.

What provoked the drama was the failure of Devi Lal's younger son Ranjit Singh and ministers of his faction to attend the swearing-in ceremony of minister of state Dharam Vir, a Chauthala man. Ranjit Singh, the agriculture minister, opposed Vir's re-induction into the ministry on the grounds that the Punjab and Haryana High Court had declared his election void for indulging in corrupt practices.

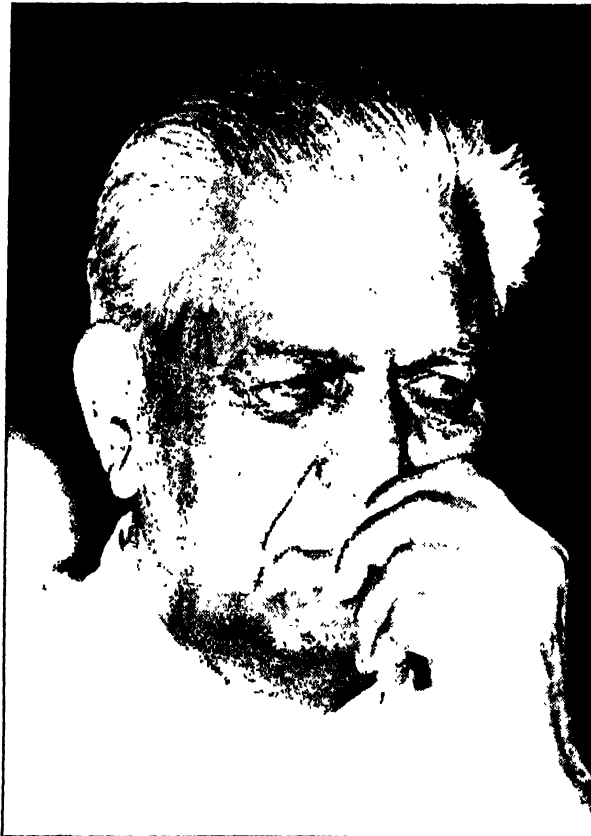
The history of the family feud goes back a long way. Devi Lal's eldest son, Om Prakash Chauthala, enjoys his total confidence. He is a good orator, an able organiser and a shrewd political operator. He is physically handicapped and has a pronounced limp—many say this is the main reason for Lal's great affection for him. Chauthala sees himself as the future chief minister of Haryana—his father's political successor. In fact, many in the Haryana Janata Dal say that he has, for a long time, been trying to convince his father to concentrate on national politics, and leave Haryana to him. Devi Lal has not complied so far,

but, at the same time, has not done anything to prevent Chauthala from becoming the second most powerful man in Haryana.

Naturally, this has upset Lal's younger son Ranjit Singh, who has over the past two years emerged as a rival power centre. While Chauthala controls the

enjoy the loyalty of 50 MLAs out of a total of 60—only ten party legislators are in the Chauthala camp.

Many important members of Lal's Cabinet—deputy chief minister Banarasi Das Gupta, industries minister K.R. Punia, irrigation and power minister Verender Singh, tourism and transport



NITIN PAI

Devi Lal is using the squabbles between his sons to strengthen his own position. He might play favourites, but he takes care not to openly side with either

party organisation, most ministers owe allegiance to Ranjit Singh. Chauthala is the Haryana Janata Dal president and enjoys the support of Master Hukum Singh, chairman of the state parliamentary board, and Hari Singh Nalwa, secretary general. Taking advantage of this, Chauthala has packed most district committees of the party with his men.

On the other hand, Ranjit has his feet firmly planted in the legislature party and the government. He is the agriculture minister (incidentally, he was also among those who were asked by Devi Lal to resign on 28 July) and is said to

minister Maha Singh, PWD minister Om Prakash Bharadwaj, forest and wildlife preservation minister Parmanand, food and supplies minister Nar Singh Dhanda, dairy development minister Sachdev Tyagi, housing minister Lachman Singh Kamboj, printing and stationery minister Manfool Singh, civil aviation minister Hari Singh Saini and social welfare minister Subhash Katyal—are staunch supporters of Ranjit Singh. Home minister Sampat Singh, development and panchayat minister Hukum Singh and minister of state Dharam Vir are the only Chauthala followers in the ministry.

That is probably why he was so keen to see his protégé re-inducted into the state Cabinet. Then, Chauthala tried to take advantage of the absence of Ranjit Singh loyalists at the swearing-in ceremony to strike at them and reduce his brother's influence.

Sources close to Ranjit Singh claim that Chauthala's sole aim is to become chief minister during Devi Lal's lifetime. And he would stoop to anything to achieve his ambition. They allege that Chauthala realises that the present MLAs would not elect him as their leader and, therefore, he has been trying to convince Devi Lal to dissolve the Assembly. But despite Devi Lal's great love for his eldest son, he is not willing to give up his *gaddi* to satisfy



Lal's eldest son, Om Prakash Chauthala, wants his father to concentrate on national politics and leave Haryana to him

Chauthala's whims.

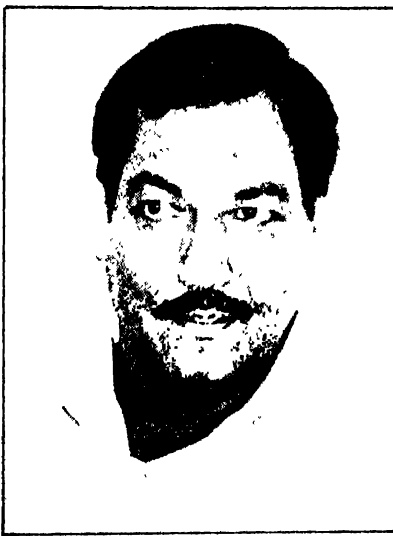
However, it was the fear that the loving father may give in to the pressure of his favourite son that made Ranjit Singh and his supporters kneel before Devi Lal and ask for forgiveness. Lal accepted their apologies and their resignations were turned down.

It all started on 27 July around 9.30 am when Devi Lal, accompanied by Om Prakash Chauthala, reached Chandigarh from Delhi in his state plane. In Delhi, he had decided to expand his Cabinet and induct three more ministers—Dharam

Vir, Ved Malik and Avtar Singh Bhadana.

But it did not please Ranjit Singh. As soon as he heard about it, he tried to dissuade his father from expanding his already grotesquely large ministry. In particular, he expressed his misgivings about re-inducting Dharam Vir, whose election was set aside by the High Court. Devi Lal agreed not to expand the ministry, but insisted on making an addition to his Cabinet: Dharam Vir. All Ranjit Singh's efforts to persuade him to change his mind failed.

Devi Lal sent word to the Governor, A. Barari, about the swearing-in of Dharam Vir. Raj Bhavan officials said they would try to arrange the function as soon as possible. Later, they informed the chief minister's office that the cere-



Ranjit Singh, Lal's other son, has become a threat to Chauthala because he enjoys the support of the majority of MLAs

mony had been scheduled for 12.30 pm on 28 July. Although most of the ministers were at the secretariat, only Sampat Singh attended the swearing-in. Devi Lal did not initially take note of the ministers' absence, but Chauthala and two bureaucrats who support him—R.S. Malik, special secretary, and A.D. Malik, director, public relations—drew his attention to the fact. They pointed out that by staying away the ministers had clearly expressed a lack of confidence in his leadership and had thereby insulted him. An infuriated Devi Lal returned to his office in the secretariat

and summoned all seven ministers who were present in Chandigarh that day and had failed to attend the swearing-in ceremony. He had had their resignation letters typed out and asked them to sign these. Crestfallen, the ministers had to obey orders. Ranjit Singh too had to resign. Chauthala was elated at this turn of events.

He and Devi Lal then proceeded to the hill resort of Morni. Meanwhile, Ranjit Singh got in touch with Prakash Singh Badal's family, which has long-standing social ties with the Lal clan. Two relatives of Badal went to Morni to persuade Lal to change his mind about the resignations. But the chief minister remained firm. Before returning to Chandigarh, Lal fixed up a meeting with Governor Barari for 5 pm on 30 July. When news of this got out, the Ranjit Singh camp panicked, fearing that a dissolution of the Assembly was on the cards. Singh along with Verendra Singh and Kripa Ram Punia met Devi Lal on the morning of 30 July and expressed their regrets for not attending the swearing-in ceremony. Their explanation was that Raj Bhavan officials had failed to inform them of the correct time and their absence had not been intentional. Mollified by their apologies Lal did not accept the resignations.

However, the chief minister has not forgiven Ranjit Singh, his suave and soft-spoken son, for expressing his displeasure over Dharam Vir's re-induction in such a defiant manner. And he took out his anger on Singh's supporter Ran Singh Mann, who was removed from the chairmanship of the Haryana Bureau of Public Enterprises. To clip his son's wings, Lal has always picked on his followers. Sometime back, Raghuvir Singh Kadiyan was removed from the council of ministers.

Observers of Haryana politics say that a veteran politician, Devi Lal is making full use of the in-fighting to strengthen his own position. He might have his favourite, but he takes care not to openly side with either camp. Thus, he does not face the problem of dissidence because all the MLAs are divided into two groups: anti-Chauthala and anti-Ranjit Singh lobbies; and there is no anti-Devi Lal faction.

However, Devi Lal's decision to re-induct Dharam Vir has made it clear that it is Chauthala who is calling the shots. But the chief minister's refusal to accept the resignations also implies that he does not want to alienate younger son Ranjit Singh and allow Chauthala to become all-powerful.

Kuldeep Kumar

Terms of disagreement

The recent talks between India and Sri Lanka achieve little

It was perhaps inevitable that it would end in failure. With both India and Sri Lanka adopting divergent positions on the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) withdrawal issue, there was little hope that the talks between the two governments—which wound up at the end of last week—would succeed. And when Sri Lankan foreign minister Ranjan Wijeratne left for Colombo with his team after saying "he was not wholly satisfied" with the outcome of the discussions, he was only understating the way he felt. Seven days of high-powered consultations—which involved Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on more than one occasion—had achieved pretty much nothing.

In the event of there being no agreement, the Indian side unilaterally put forward a proposal on the IPKF pull-out. It told Sri Lanka that the troops would leave in stages and that this would be linked with the effectiveness with which power devolved on the Tamil-majority North-Eastern Province. It is said that India promised Sri Lanka that the last IPKF soldier would leave the island by March if she ensured adequate devolution. The Sri Lankan Cabinet would have discussed the Indian offer earlier this week but it is hard to see how President Ranasinghe Premadasa

can accept it. For one, the Indians had promised early this year to withdraw the IPKF completely by the end of December; Wijeratne had even announced this before the Sri Lankan Parliament in March. For another, it firmly links withdrawal with devolution—an issue that Premadasa has strongly contested from the very outset of the diplomatic crisis.

Premadasa has even more problems because the Indians did not offer the concession he sorely wanted. Colombo was willing to extend the date for the troop withdrawal if the Indians called off their military offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and confined the IPKF to its barracks.

But New Delhi would have none of this and was willing to offer only a temporary and conditional ceasefire. The fear now is that the talks between the Tamil militant organisation and the Sri Lankan government—aimed at achieving a political settlement—could become jeopardised.

The Indian attitude to the diplomatic crisis became clearer when, midway through the talks, the chief minister of Sri Lanka's North-Eastern Province, Varadaraja Perumal, was invited to New Delhi. Perumal, who heads the India-supported Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) government has been nervous of his ministry's dismissal ever since Colombo began talking to the rival LTTE. Perumal's New Delhi

sent one very clear signal—that India was going to stand by him and his government. Clearly, New Delhi is not prepared—at least not now at any rate—to withdraw its support from the EPRLF and its government in order to settle the diplomatic crisis. This became even more evident when it became known that India requested that the strength of the Civil Volunteer Force (CVF) be doubled. The CVF comprises Tamil youth who owe their allegiance mainly to the EPRLF and, with the permission of the Sri Lankan government, has been armed and trained by India to provide protection to the North-Eastern Provincial government.

India, however, was keen to make out that the talks were completely fruitful.

When asked whether the talks were a failure, an Indian foreign office spokesman replied, "Not at all. We would term them a success." In a narrow sense they may have well been. For India succeeded in getting the Sri Lankans to discuss the devolution question—a matter that Colombo has consistently claimed had nothing to do with the withdrawal question. New Delhi has also not conceded anything during the negotiations and somewhat cleverly made a proposal that it has passed off as a new offer.

The ball is now in Premadasa's court.

The pressure on him now is even greater. For one, his decision to send Wijeratne to Delhi is viewed in his country as something of a climbdown from the tough position he had adopted earlier on the IPKF withdrawal. Secondly, he is facing increasing opposition from within his own party for having bungled the issue. Moreover, the Sirimavo Bandaranaike-led Opposition is having a field day by highlighting his failures and the Sinhala extremist group, Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), has found cause to renew its violent campaign. A lot will depend on the position Colombo adopts in the next few days.

Shiraz Sidhva/New Delhi



Ranjan Wijeratne (centre) with Rajiv Gandhi (right): unfruitful discussions

Colombo was willing to extend the date for the troop withdrawal if the Indians called off their military offensive against the Tamil Tigers and confined the IPKF to its barracks. But New Delhi would have none of this

Electoral equations



Both the Congress(I) and the Opposition are confident of a victory in the ensuing polls

KULDIP NAYAR

The monsoon session of the Lok Sabha was more of a formality because members spent more time in the lobby than in the House. There were animated discussions on which party or person might win from which constituency. What struck one was the confidence exuded by both the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal.

"We were nowhere, but after the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the Panchayati Raj Bill the wave in our favour is as strong as it was when we raised the slogan 'garibi hatao' in the 1972 poll," says one top Congress(I) leader from Bihar. "We will now have an easy time." Equally sanguine is a top Janata Dal leader who believes that his party will get a majority on its own and he puts the figure for the National Front at 425. "The people have made up their minds to vote against the corrupt government of Rajiv Gandhi," he says.

Whatever their claims, both sides are depending on each other's mistakes. And privately they do not mind admitting that the Opposition's best friend is Rajiv Gandhi just as Rajiv Gandhi's is the Opposition. However, not even the Congress(I) contests the contention that if the Opposition manages to put up a single candidate against each of their party candidates, it would not lose.

A SURVEY which the Congress(I) has held through an election expert indicates that the Congress(I) will get less than 150 seats if the Opposition avoids a triangular contest. He has also reportedly predicted that the party's chances would considerably improve if it were to have an alliance with the leftist parties. And if Rajiv Gandhi's own men are to be believed, he sought the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev's help in winning over the CPI and CPI(M) when the two met in Moscow recently.

The CPI may tilt towards Rajiv Gandhi, but it is most unlikely that the CPI(M) would. Why should it not wait till

after the election when its block of nearly 50 Lok Sabha members might be decisive if there were to be a hung Parliament?

The Janata Dal feels that its only problem is the differences that plague the party. Chandra Shekhar is said to be the villain of the piece and there are important people in the Dal who believe that he would continue to "sabotage" the party from within till the elections; some go to the extent of saying that he may quit at the eleventh hour and join the Janata, reportedly his baby.

However, knowledgeable circles say that V.P. Singh is equally to blame because he sometimes says or acts on his own, without even consulting the seven-member political committee of the Dal. But despite such behaviour on his part, they predict a victory for the Dal.

After seeing the big response to the two meetings V.P. Singh, Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar held recently in Rajasthan, Chandra Shekhar is said to have observed: "*Raj to aah raha hai, lekin batwara pahley hi shuroo ho gaya* (Power is coming but the division has begun even before it has come)."

The confidence of the Dal has been provided a fillip by the belief that it will ultimately come to have electoral adjustments with the BJP on the one hand and the communists on the other. Those who are engaged in the talks with the BJP say that Atal Behari Vajpayee's role is "most constructive", although his party is said to have pitched its demand "too high". In the communist camp, Jyoti Basu is believed to favour such an electoral understanding.

THERE IS some speculation about the 'Muslim vote'. V.P. Singh's absence from the Muslim convention called by Syed Shahabuddin caused some concern. The reason why he did not attend was the threat of Arif Mohammad

Khan to walk out of the Dal if he did. Shahabuddin made personal requests to him and even had Chandra Shekhar speak to V.P. Singh, but Arif's threat prevailed.

Both Mahinder Singh Tikait and Kanshi Ram of the Bahujan Samaj Party are considered important figures by the Dal as well as the Congress(I). It appears that Tikait may go it alone, if he does not ally with the Dal. But Kanshi Ram has reached an understanding with the Congress; the all-out effort to fill in at least 36,000 job vacancies reserved for the scheduled castes and tribes by 15 August is part of the fallout of his understanding with Rajiv Gandhi.

What the Dal and the Congress(I) are not sure about is the mind of the

five crore voters, who have acquired franchise after the voting age was lowered to 18. The Dal has announced that it would make the 'right to work' a fundamental right in the Constitution rather than be part of the Directive Principles. But this should be spelt out if it is not to remain only a slogan. A constitutional right to work does not say much. The youth also want social change.

The Congress(I) has made no pronouncement on this subject. In expecting their youthful leader, Rajiv Gandhi, to have an appeal, the party is oblivious of the fact that the young are apt to be idealistic and may be even more critical than the old of the corrupt record of the government. ■

The Janata Dal feels that its only problem is the differences that plague the party. Chandra Shekhar is said to be the villain of the piece. Some feel that he would continue to 'sabotage' the party from within till the elections



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When you'd rather own your vacations.



Why is Hema Malini betraying signs of such desperation? Not only is she grabbing every offer that comes her way, her legendary miserliness is getting much worse. Always renowned for paying her dance troupe a pittance (after all, being in her employ more than compensated), Malini has decided to go in for even more drastic cost reduction measures. For instance, she no longer hires an auditorium, where her dancers can practice. Instead, they have to make do with a makeshift stage in the hall at the back of her bungalow.

But why this money mania? Surely Ms Malini has made enough money in her Dream-Girl days to live comfortably ever after.

Has the onset of the mid-life crisis led to this insecurity? Or is Dharmendra's neglect (witness his hand-on performance with Dimple on the sets of their latest co-starrer) leading to this increased tight-fistedness?



Dharmendra: neglecting the wife much fanfare in a film called *Misal*—and sank without a trace.

Now she has resurfaced, with a new name to boot. And Bobby is all set to take the industry by storm in a film called *Soochna*. No prizes for guessing who got her the role. Yes, it was Mithun Chakraborty.

Madhuri Dixit may have trouble round the corner. Trade gossip has it that the

Madhuri Dixit: one-film wonder, (inset)
Sangeeta Bijlani: one better



Hema Malini: tight-fisted

Ek do teen girl's performance is far short of passable in her latest release. So much so, that even true blue dumb belles such as Sonam and Sangeeta Bijlani have stolen the show from her.

So, for all you know, we may have yet another one-film wonder on our hands.

Whatever you might say, being in love has improved their histrionics (however

ham-handed). Yes, we are talking of Vinod Khanna and Amrita Singh, they of the on again-off again affair.

Those who have seen *Batwara* have come out raving about the duo, both of whom have, apparently, put in stellar performances, and appear



Amrita Singh: the real thing

as much in love as ever.

We hope, for their sakes, that it's the real thing this time.

If Kader Khan is a universal favourite in the film industry, it is not entirely without reason. The ace dialogue writer (even if it is in the *Kutte, main tera khoon pee jaoonga* genre) goes out of his way to ensure that none of his producers are inconvenienced by him—even going to the extent of shooting on Id day, as he did for Jagdish Sidana's *Sherdil*.

The last day of the film's shooting coincided with the festival. If Khan had chosen to stay away, and he had reason to do so, the producer would have incurred massive losses. The set would have had to be erected all over again and the dates of the stars would have gone waste.

But, much to Sidana's relief, Kader reported on time, though at considerable personal cost. Mrs Khan was, reportedly, up in arms at his desertion, and life was far from comfortable at home for days on end.



Mithun Chakraborty: playing the Good Samaritan

Grant this to Mithun Chakraborty. He doesn't ever give up. And when he's playing the Good Samaritan, his doggedness is very nearly legendary.

A few years ago, Mithun was promoting a little-known starlet Manjeet Kaur, with the fanatic zeal which only an ex-Naxalite is capable of. The lady was launched with



Class(ical) will tell

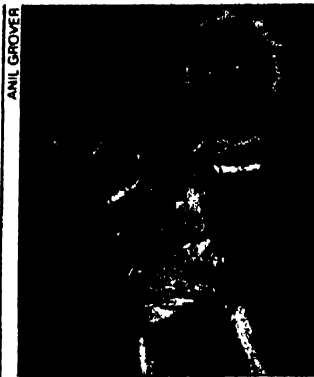
● He sure is taken with his standard description—art filmmaker. For, what has Utpalendu Chakraborty done but gone into the arts? His latest film, *Chhandaneer*, steers clear of the social injustice theme, and deals with the life of a classical dancer. In keeping with his preoccupation with authenticity, Chakraborty has real-life danseuse Anjana Banerjee in the lead.



Utpalendu Chakraborty: Into the arts

And no, the film isn't autobiographical.

That isn't what makes it special, though. What has created news is the report that *Chhandaneer* will be premiered in London this November,



Anjana Banerjee: true to life performance

with the Prince of Wales among the audience. Richard Attenborough, the maker of *Gandhi* and star of Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khilari*, will present Anjana Banerjee to the audience.

Water, water, everywhere

● Okay, it was a very hot summer by English standards, but surely Kalpnath Rai overdid it a bit.

On an 'official' visit to London, Rai, accompanied by his family (of course), put up at the city's Hotel Churchill. All was well, with the minister attending to pressing business, while the junior Rais entertained themselves as best as they could. Until one evening, when Rai—overcome by



Kalpnath Rai: flooded out pangs of conscience at his neglect of the young ones, no doubt—decided to give them a night in town.

The minister's heart was obviously in the right place. But his mind was on other matters—for he left all the bathroom taps open. While the Rais lived it up, the water seeped down—right into the bedroom, until it began to resemble the site of a Bihar flash flood.

That's the scene the hotel staff walked into. And, aghast, shot off a bill of £500 to the Indian high commission. Which, not surprisingly, washed its hands off the entire matter, handing the tap...sorry, tab to the minister.



Ramesh Krishnan: proud father

Papa didn't reach

● In the Krishnan family they have their own way of doing things. When Ramesh Krishnan was born on 6 June, 1961, father Ramanathan Krishnan was away—playing in a tennis tournament in Stockholm. And when Ramesh Krishnan became a father in his turn on 29 July, 1989, he wasn't at home either.

While wife Priya gave birth to a cute little daughter in a private nursing home in Madras, Ramesh was thwacking a tennis ball with his customary gusto at a tournament in Washington. While nobody knows if his game suffered as a consequence of first baby blues, Ramesh was missed at home.

But maybe there's a method to this. Perhaps the Krishnans feel that it's best to be on court at the time of the happy event.

From *glasnost* to theatrics

● You can't keep a good man down for long. And if he's Bhaskar Ghosh, you certainly can't keep him out of the news.

After months spent in the oblivion of the ministry of culture, Ghosh was back to doing what he's best at—hogging the limelight. On the first of this month, Ghosh gave a brilliant performance at a play-reading session held in the capital.



Bhaskar Ghosh: In the limelight, again

Resplendent in an olive green silk toga (worn over a pair of humble kurta pyjamas), Ghosh captivated the audience with his depiction of Demokos, the Trojan poet, in Jean Giraudoux's

play *Tiger At The Gates*. The play, directed by theatre personality and ace ad man Gerson Dacunha, had television stars such as Bhaskar (Alpha Plus) Bhattacharya and Tejeshwar Singh in the cast.

But it was Ghosh who walked away with the accolades, as after an hour or so of loud histrionics, he fell dead with a resounding thud.

Well, we suppose, everyone has to be good at something.

No easy canter

● It was built up as *the* race.

The contestants: M.A.M. Ramaswamy, the monarch of Madras racing, and the United Breweries chief, Vijay Malliya, recent entrant into the charmed circle of racing.

In the fray: Malliya's Pierce Arrow, King Air and Golden Treasure, and Ramaswamy's Oxford Blue, Ministrella and Incidence.

Despite the UB Group's announcement awarding the winner a stupendous Rs 6 lakhs, the Kingfisher Derby proved to be the proverbial damp squib. Just as the much-publicised event was about to get under way, the heavens themselves



Vijay Malliya: a long wait

opened. And the stewards, unanimous in not wanting to "risk the horses in wet underfoot conditions", postponed the meet by a week.

Come next Saturday and the clouds refused to relent. Punters stayed away, secure in

the knowledge that the deluge would make it impossible to conduct the race. Foolish decision. For, the race was run and Malliya had his spirits dampened even further by the results. His prize colt Pierce Arrow finished

third—behind Ramaswamy's Ministrella and Oxford Blue.

This being the season's last race, Malliya will have to wait until the next to get his own back. Well, at least he'll have a long time to plot his revenge.

M.A.M. Ramaswamy: winner, as always



Bronze is out

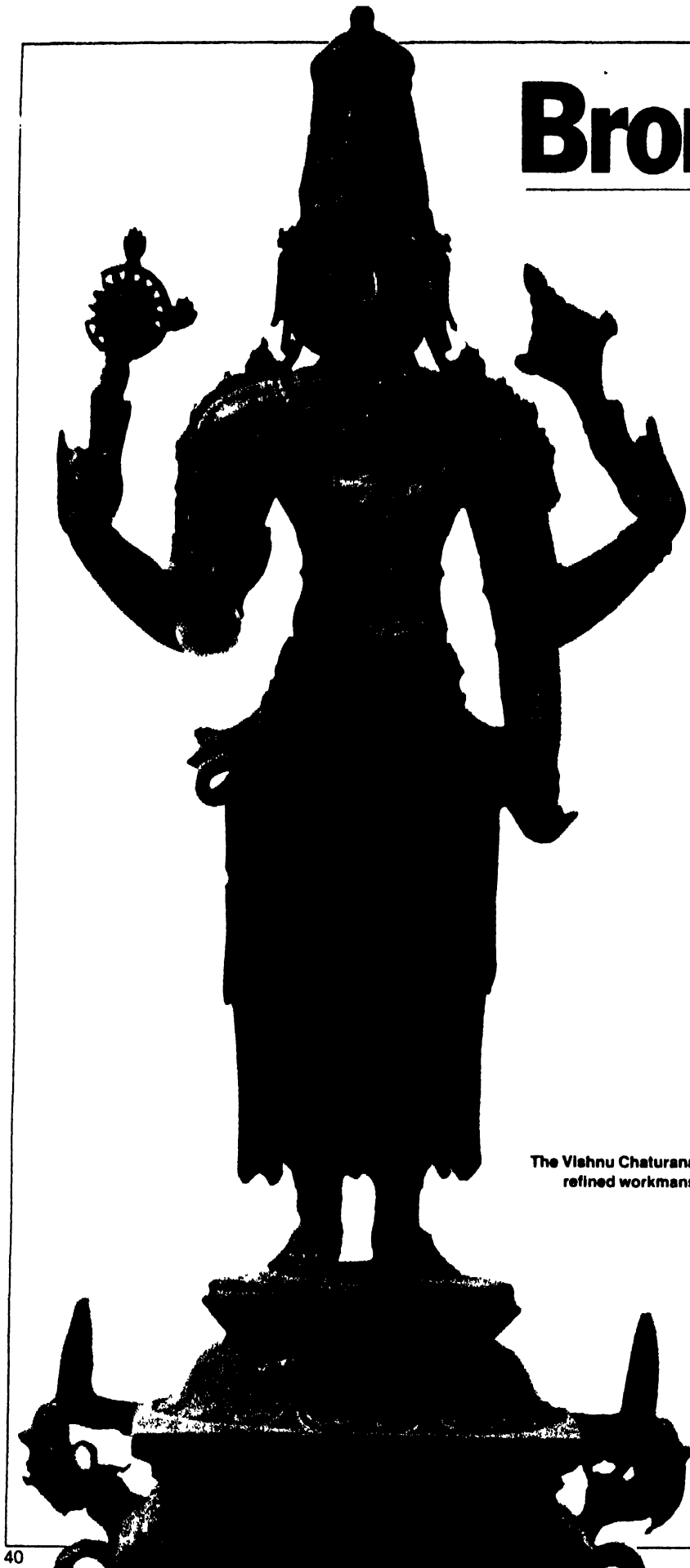
The National Museum in Delhi exhibits rare bronze sculptures for the first time

Some of the finest art treasures in the world are buried in the vaults of museums. Due to reasons of security and lack of space, art is often confined to basements and heavily-guarded cells—away from the public eye. For instance, the National Museum in New Delhi has a collection of over 180,000 pieces of art, of which, only five per cent have ever been displayed. "But we are changing that," says Dr Lakshmi P. Sihare, director-general of the museum. Recently, the museum inaugurated a renovated gallery of select bronze, unearthing 92 exquisite pieces of Indian bronze sculptures.

"In the history of sculpture in the world, India has occupied a significant place with its aesthetic approach. Bronze as a metal is malleable and allows for more intricate and delicate details. It seemed rather incongruous not to have a separate gallery highlighting the accomplishments of these great masters," explains Sihare. The bronze pieces on display span the period between the 5th and the 19th century, though India's rich tradition of bronze casting goes as far back as 2500 BC. The art reached its zenith during the Gupta period and also flourished under the Cholas in south India. Moreover, the tradition of crafting bronze images using the *cire perdue* or the lost wax method existed almost countrywide. And the new gallery bears ample testimony to this.

Of the 92 bronze masterpieces, the museum has declared nine of them national art treasures. These are of great significance. The Inscribed Buddha (Gupta, 5th century) discovered at Phopnar, Madhya Pradesh, in 1964, is the rarest of the seven Phopnar bronzes, all of which belong to the National Museum. Crafted in the Gupta-Vakataka style, this beautifully enrobed statue of the standing Buddha is inscribed with a dedicatory text bequeathing peace to all beings. This image is remarkable for its fine proportions and classical attributes. According to an

The Vishnu Chaturanana:
refined workmanship



expert at the museum, inscribed works of art are always more valuable, because there are few bronzes of the Gupta age that have survived; the Phophnar hoard is perhaps the most significant ever unearthed.

The Nalanda bronze (consisting of 15 Buddhist figures) are prized because they were excavated from an archaeological site and are therefore definitely genuine. The most remarkable of these is the Birth of the Buddha (Pala, 9th century), the only known piece of its kind. Never before has this theme been so elaborately sculpted—Queen Maya clasps a branch of the flowering *sal* tree while an infant Buddha emerges from her right to be received on the outstretched palm of the Vedic god, Indra. Celestial music is depicted by a drum on the upper left, played by a pair of hands. Here, art doesn't imitate life, but the end-effect is eye-catching.

The Vishnu Chaturana (Kashmir, 9th century) was acquired by the museum from a Srinagar home where it was worshipped till a few years ago. This bronze does not attain the grandeur of some of its better-known counterparts, but, according to an expert, it has refined workmanship. It depicts an unusual epiphanic aspect of Vishnu, combining four heads, including that of a boar and a lion (reminiscent of two of his best-known incarnations), with the angry Kapila in the background.

The early Chola period is best represented by the Tripurantaka Shiva (south India, 9th century). This exquisite piece is rare in north India; there may be similar ones in south Indian temples. This piece (the only one of its kind in the National Museum) shows Shiva sans his weapons, only giving an illusion of the god wielding his bow. His chariot is drawn by horses, which symbolically represent the Vedas, while Brahma is his charioteer. Here Shiva is profusely bejewelled, with an elegant head-dress and wearing a flower garment decorated with geometric and floral patterns, secured at the waist by two girdles.

When Auguste Rodin, the famous French sculptor, first saw the bronze image of the Nataraja, his tresses flying, poised in celestial dance atop his abode, Mount Kailasa, he exclaimed, "...Viewed from a certain profile, the Nataraja appears as if reaching towards the infinite..." This statue is certainly the most familiar symbol of Indian bronze art, and there are two exquisite examples of it on display in the museum. However, the 9th century Chola Nataraja which is the pride of the new gallery is different and rare. It is the only piece

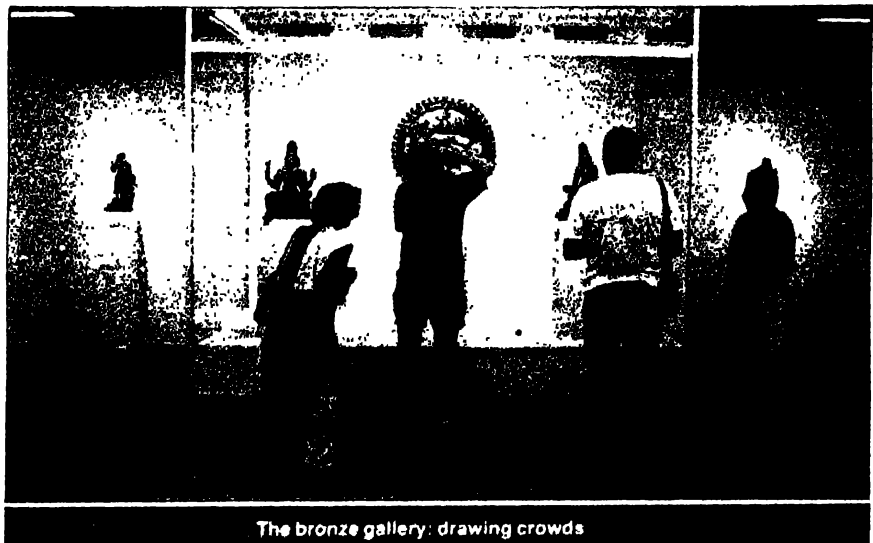
of its kind both in the museum, and possibly north India. Another popular theme in south India is that of the Kaliyamardan. Krishna (10th century), and the gallery boasts an exquisite Chola bronze unequalled anywhere in the north. Krishna destroys Kali, the hooded serpent; from a purely aesthetic point of view, this is a unique piece.

The National Museum also displays a statue—the Svachchhanda Bhairavi (Chamba, 12th century), which explores a rare theme. There are only three such known images, one of which is in the United States; the other is completely mutilated. This Utpala bronze shows the five-headed goddess within a double flaming aureole, seated on the shoulders of a four-armed Shiva. The

south Indian art Bharata is shown standing on a double lotus pedestal, wearing a *dhoti* secured at the waist with a ornamental floral clasp.

The Vasudeva Kamalaja (Nepal, 15th century), acquired by the museum in 1982, is the only one of its kind in the country.

The bronze gallery, which took seven months to prepare, is tastefully designed in the best traditions of the National Museum. The architecture of the gallery gives one a feeling of space which is why the authorities can be excused for displaying only a few works in bronze. "The idea," explains Sihare "is to enable a small class of about 35 schoolchildren to sit on the floor and be



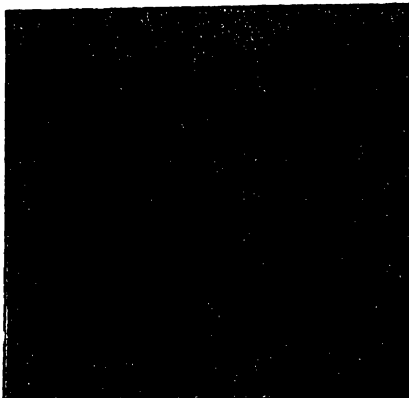
The bronze gallery: drawing crowds

statue portrays the terrifying aspect of the goddess.

While the gods are amply portrayed in bronze, devotees like Bharata are rarely idolised in bronze or stone. But the gallery has the unique distinction of displaying Bharata with Ram's sandals, placed on a cushion atop his head. Dating back to the Vijayanagar period (14th century), this bronze is a fine example of

shown these wonders." He feels "Seeing one of these originals is equal to reading a hundred books." So, perhaps, it is not surprising that visitors are overawed by these pieces sculpted by ancient Indian craftsmen. "They are exquisite, you can feel the tension in the muscles," enthuses a British tourist, Barbara Walsh. "What I find especially relaxing in this gallery are the green walls. I wish they'd reproduce miniatures of these for us to take home." "We knew the bronze art was highly developed in our country, but we did not imagine that statues could inspire such fine emotions," says Sheela Nath, a teacher. The museum authorities have relied wholly on indigenous materials. "The effect could have been better still had we imported display accessories and sophisticated lighting," confides Sihare. "But then it would not have been our own effort." As visitors rave and National Museum authorities beam with pride, this gallery draws increasing crowds.

Shiraz Siddha/New Delhi



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Curtains?

Is the golden age of Tamil theatre dead?

There was a time when Tamil plays were a sell-out. When *sabhas* (theatres) in Madras saw large queues of people at the box-office, all vying for that elusive ticket to a world of the fantastic. When theatre was a live entertainment form. When membership of some of the prestigious *sabhas* was considered a status symbol.

No longer. The theatre scene in Madras today is marked by falling standards and an unfortunate tendency towards vulgarity. Even going by sheer numbers, the situation is far from happy. There were about 70 *sabhas* in Madras during the golden era of Tamil theatre, that is 1961-75, all of which would hold regular performances over the weekend. R. Krishnaswamy, president of the Federation of Sabhas says: "After the advent of TV, the numbers of the *sabhas* dwindled fast. With the result

that there are only 17 *sabhas* now. And even among them, only a handful, maybe ten, are still active."

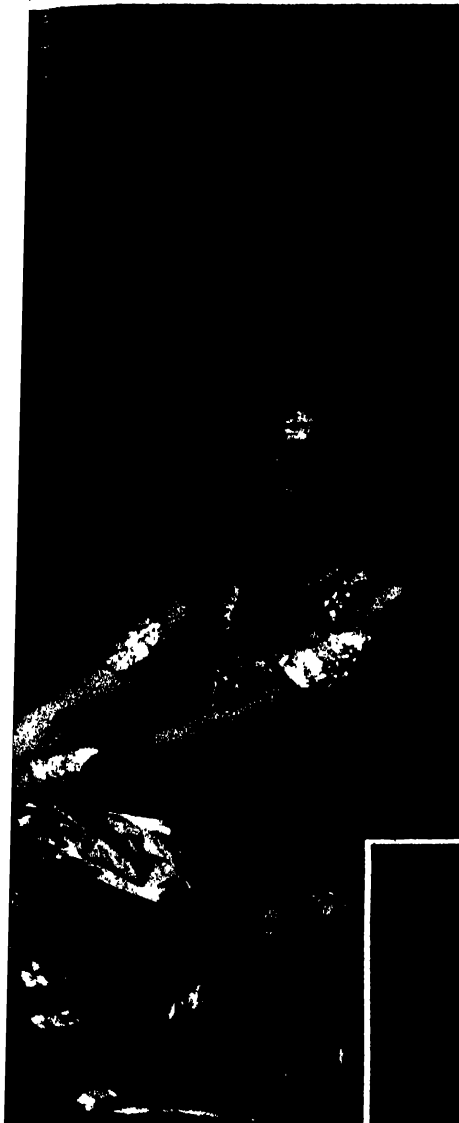
Agrees Y.G. Parthasarathy, a name in Tamil theatre circles: "There was a big

The theatre scene in Madras today is marked by falling standards and an unfortunate tendency towards vulgarity. No longer are Tamil plays a sell-out



boom between 1970 and 1980, but the same enthusiasm does not exist anymore. Most of the dramas put up today are not worth considering. Some of these troupes have taken drama to such low depths that it hurts someone like me, who has been in the field for 56 years."

Almost everyone decries the present-day tendency to peddle vulgarity in order to draw the crowds and increase gate collection. T.T. Vasu, president of the prestigious Music Academy says: "There is no theme and no moral message in these plays any longer." Cho Ramaswamy, one of the biggest names in Tamil theatre, agrees: "In the dirty competition that is going on between some of these drama troupes, dialogues have become very obscene. The playwrights are dragging down the audience to their base levels."



(Above) A modern dance drama: falling standards;
(right) A scene from an old Tamil rural folk play: lavish stage effects



K. SANCHAYAN

The criticism is far from unfounded. Take the case of the popular play now being staged in half a dozen auditoriums in the city. In one sequence, the lady of the house receives a phone call from a person who wants to know where her husband is. In all innocence, she replies: "*Mele paduthukittu irukkaru.*" Literally translated, the sentence means: "He is sleeping upstairs." But there is a *double entendre* involved. '*Mele*' can also be interpreted to mean that her husband is lying on top of her. Such is the stuff of Tamil theatre today.

As a logical corollary, the nature of the theatre-goer has changed too. Ear-

lier, he was a genuine enthusiast, who understood the intricacies of stagecraft, and could analyse the play with feeling. Now, he comes to the theatre house looking for cheap entertainment, and predictably, laps up every obscenity and vulgar pun. And asks for more. "There is no dedication anymore," complains veteran dramatist R. S. Manohar. "Many of them treat the theatre as a place where they could spend a couple of hours on their way home from their offices. Something like stopping at a hotel for a cup of coffee."

Is the audience, then, getting the theatre it deserves? Or is the playwright to blame for underestimating, and in cases, corrupting its taste? Nobody seems to know for sure. So, the usual game of passing the buck ensues. As Parthasarathy says: "The situation is akin to that which prevails in Tamil cinema which is also going down the drain. The audience blames the playwright and he in turn blames the audience."

Not everyone sees the developments in such a negative light, though. Defends playwright Komal Swaminathan: "Such plays have their own place and are

their play is on before an exasperated audience."

Perhaps without realising that they wouldn't get away with their vulgarisms on the silver screen. As V.R.S. Sampath, member of the film censor board remarked after seeing a play by popular dramatist-film star S.V. Shekhar: "If all this is shown in a movie, we will apply the scissors without any hesitation."

Indifferent fare had been on show for long enough. But after the entry of television in the mid-70s, people began to ask themselves if theatre was really worth spending time and money on. And the answer was an emphatic no. As Cho Ramaswamy says: "The family thought it was best to stay indoors and watch television, even though Doordarshan programmes were far from good." At least, that way they didn't have to pay for transportation to the *sabhas* and spend money on buying tickets. "Theatre is not challenging television," complains Cho. "For that you need excellence, which is not on offer."

Even Ramaswamy, for that matter, has slowly begun dissociating himself from the theatre scene, cutting down on the number of performances, for starters. When the *sabhas* pester him for dates, Cho pleads to be left alone. "We are limiting ourselves to about four plays a month, not more," says the dramatist. Cho, whose Viveka Fine Arts has produced 23 plays, some on social themes, others wholesome comedies clothed in political satire, all of which have been staged over a hundred times, has now, for all practical purposes, retired. He has not produced a new play since 1984.

It says something for the dearth of good plays that the repeats of his old dramas, written 20 years back draw full house. All Ramaswamy does is make a few minor alterations in the script to keep abreast of the times. And the audience troops in—in full force.

Even veteran dramatist R.S. Manohar has been inactive for the past year or so, and there are rumours to the effect that he may retire from the business. The playwright himself, however, insists that he is planning a comeback and is on the look-out for a good story idea.

No doubt, his comeback vehicle will have all the characteristics of a typical Manohar production—an anti-hero

staged all over the world—even in England. One should not reject them as mere vulgar stuff." The problem arises, maintains Swaminathan, when the public begins regarding them as mainstream drama, as is happening in Madras, instead of treating them as incidental stuff.

Quality also suffers because dramatists write their scripts with one eye on the movie business. Says Parthasarathy: "I had all along concentrated on the stage, though I started acting at the age of 15. Whereas the present crop of playwrights and stage actors are already dreaming of movie careers even while

Banned?
Because it has a 53 cm F.S.T.?
Because it's way ahead of time?
Because it has mind-blowing features?
Or just because it's going to unleash
a fresh wave of envy?

ONIDA 21

Neighbour's envy. Owner's pride.



**SHOULD
THE NEW ONIDA
BE BANNED?**

as the central character and stupendous (by Indian standards at least) stage effects. All of his plays have some villainous character from Indian mythology—Ravana, Chanakya, Parsurama, Indrajit—portrayed, with an attempt to project their more positive qualities. In *Vishwamitra*, Manohar used a special effect to suspend himself in mid-air, which had the viewers applauding enthusiastically. In fact, an attempt to go in for innovative stagecraft is a hallmark of all Manohar's productions. He says: "Drama is the visualisation of the story on the stage. It is not just a few dialogues delivered and done with."



A new theatre in Madras: not drawing enough crowds

That the advent of electronic entertainment—TV and the video—took a heavy toll on Tamil theatre cannot be denied. But is that all there is to it? After all as S. Eknath, founder-president of the South India Video Chamber of Commerce says: "Do you think there is less of TV and video in Bombay and Calcutta than in Madras? It is just that there are good theatre groups over there." Eknath refuses to accept responsibility for the sorry state of Tamil theatre, which, he says, is crumbling beneath the weight of its own "rottenness".



A scene from a contemporary Tamil play: a fresh beginning?

Argues Eknath: "I was in London four months ago and was astounded when I was taken to a play which they said was running for over two years. The stagecraft was so fantastic that we could see forests and large houses on the stage. When are we going to improve our own techniques in Madras? Why blame the video boom alone?"

But Eknath agrees that the market for video sets has never been better. Now, it is no longer only the rich-rich who go in for them—even the middle-classes are buying videos under the new hire purchase schemes. And consequently even this class is moving out of the theatre circuit.

But all is not lost. Not as yet anyway.

The contemporary theatre-goer is no longer a genuine enthusiast. He comes to the auditorium looking for cheap entertainment and laps up every obscenity and pun

And certainly not as long as men such as N.A. Muthuswamy exist. Muthuswamy has formed a band of young theatre enthusiasts under the name of Koothupattarai (Theatre Workshop), who put up plays popularising rural Tamil stagecraft. As yet, the audience is rather small, numbering only 60-70 people, but Muthuswamy and his team are far from disheartened. Things will get better, they insist. And Koothupattarai will prove a fresh beginning for Tamil theatre.

R. Bhagwan Singh / Madras

Dancing to her own tune

Shobhana Jeyasingh choreographs Bharatanatyam for the French Bicentenary—with fire engines, simulated rain and Hindi music

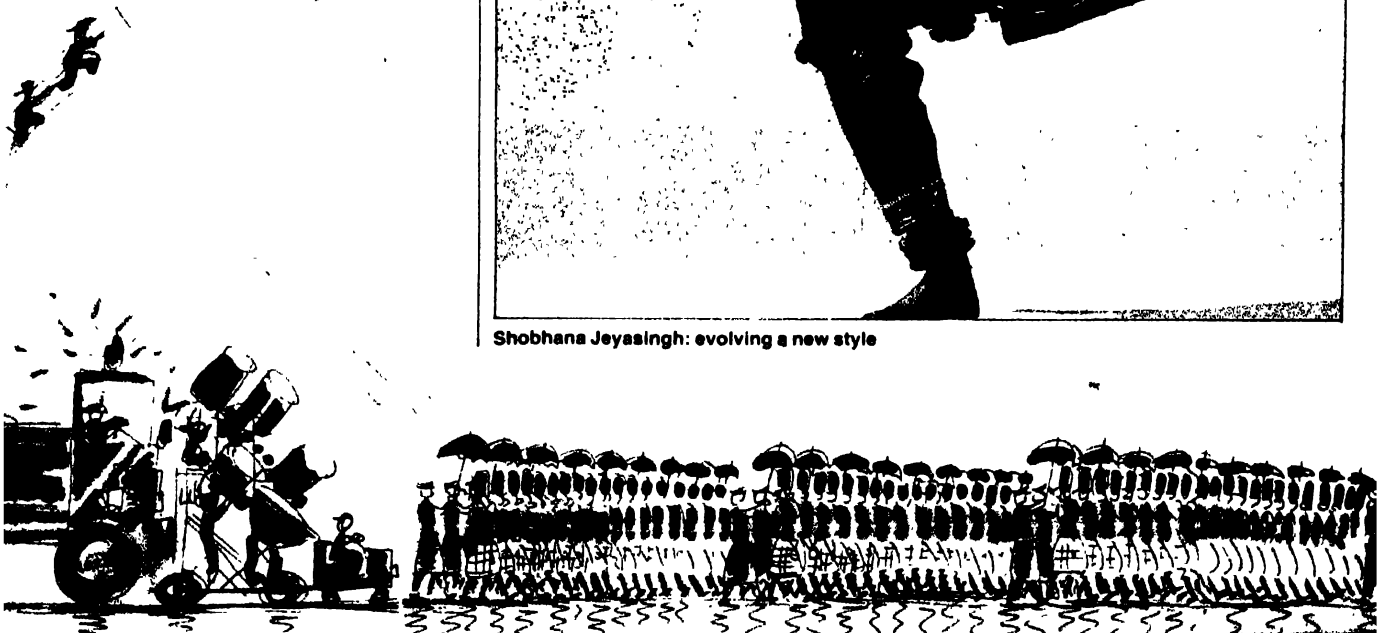
Barefoot down the cobbled Champs Elysee, Bharatanatyam to a popular Hindi song, with a fire engine liberally spraying water to simulate the London rain. When French designer Jean Paul Goude approached dancer Shobhana Jeyasingh to execute this idea for the French Bicentenary celebrations, she initially thought it absurd.

A strict Bharatanatyam classicist, it took Jeyasingh two weeks to get used to the idea. But faced with Goude's insistence, she abandoned conservatism and *Britain—Street Culture* went on the march in Paris, complete with 20 Bharatanatyam dancers, *tabla*, *shehnai* and a popular Hindi song: *Yeh azaadi ka din hai* "It's definitely something that won't be seen for a very, very long time," says Jeyasingh.

Most people, especially the British, were taken aback by the fact that Britain was to be represented by Bharatanatyam dancers, in a sequence choreographed by an Indian. But this was in keeping with Goude's idea to give the Paris Bastille Day Parade a sense of the real. No tourist stereotypes from



Shobhana Jeyasingh: evolving a new style



each country but the realities of its street life. The large Asian populace in Britain, which lives in the inner cities, was his theme for Britain.

"It was a fantastic idea," says Jeyasingh. "Goude's concept was a theme about the unity of the world, about the migrations that have taken place and the world as it is now. Most countries show you the purist version on occasions like these. Goude wanted the real version. Besides, Indian music and dance have made a major contribution to British society and it was great to give it such a platform."

Ironically, it was the French who were providing this platform. The British themselves would never have shown such a racial mix, probably preferring Scottish bagpipes to such exotica. Little wonder then, that the British press either dismissed the dance entirely, or described it as "a ritualistic dance", a "disco in the rain" and "the nightmare of British tourism".

Jeyasingh had her own problems. "I had to be careful to see that the dance kept its classical quality and did not become cheapened because it was being performed on the road," she says. "It had to have the formality that the occasion demanded. So it was mainly derived from Bharatanatyam, but had a lot of contemporary dance steps as well."

It took Jeyasingh two months to choreograph and train the dancers. Costumes, jewellery, music were all argued over with Goude and a compromise arrived at. Goude's original idea of black trousers with a short tunic was abandoned in favour of black *salwar*-like trousers with a long frock (a little like what Kathak dancers wear) over it. The black dress was set off with gold jewellery. On the day of the march the black ballet shoes were abandoned as the drenching and dancing took its toll on the girls. "The Champs Elysee was lined with shoes which the dancers had kicked off," recounts Jeyasingh. "Soaking shoes was just too much for them. One of the girls even handed me some of her jewellery. I gave it to someone in the audience."



A cartoonist's impression of Shobhana Jeyasingh in the French Bicentennial brochure

Jeyasingh did not dance in the parade. But instead of watching it from the Place De La Concorde like the other guests, she walked along with the dancers and was treated to a good soak as well.

Originally from Madras, a student of Guru Balluboor Samaraj Pillai, Jeyasingh came to Britain to complete her masters in English Literature at Sussex University. Struck by the fact that Indians knew much more about Britain than the British knew about India, Jeyasingh felt that she "had to get the balance better". Literature was abandoned for her first love, Bharatanatyam, for which she felt there was a considerable audience. And it's been shows ever since—as many as 23-24 solo performances in a year.

Jeyasingh's major initiative in modern dance came last year when she worked with musician Michael Nyman to blend Bharatanatyam with Western classical music. Her creations called *Miniatures* and *Configuration* was premiered at the South Bank's Purcell Room, and is still

being staged in Britain. "I wanted to make the British audience aware of the classical purity and style of Bharatanatyam," she says. "Normally they think that if you are dressed in vibrant colours and are wearing a lot of jewellery, you couldn't be performing classical dance. They never think there is any technique in the dance. I wanted to show them how precise and mathematical Bharatanatyam is. It wasn't just the blending with Western music that I had in mind. The music had to be composed to my footwork. I would notate the footwork and the music would be written. I thought it was something very Indian and very British and made specially for a British audience."

It was probably Jeyasingh's *Miniatures* that led to the offer from Goude. Here again, she had to create a dance style that was modern as well as classical. "The song in the background was totally different from anything a Bharatanatyam dancer can dance to," says Jeyasingh. "But I found that though it was difficult for me, the dancers took to it quite easily. These girls have been born here, so this sort of blending is truly representative of their being British and Asians."

Jeyasingh who works full time as a professional dancer is now choreographing a piece for the National Youth Dance Company where she will be combining jazz and Carnatic music—already a popular musical structure—to dance. "If the music goes so well together, I don't see why dance can't," says Jeyasingh.

The performance will be staged in September, but before that Jeyasingh will put up her Paris creation in London, at the contemporary dance centre in the city, the Palace Theatre. "This time without the rain," says Jeyasingh, "and better off without it."

Shrabani Basu/London and Paris





RAJESH SAHA

Fishing boats with Red Cross flags carrying relief and (below) Lankan Tamil refugees returning to Jaffna: fractured island

The genesis of Eelam

Wherever one flies in from, as the plane approaching Colombo begins its gentle descent, the 'Taste of Paradise' promised by Air Lanka's brochures seems imminent and almost tangible. The picture postcard-like perfection of the island continues on the ground: the trees, greens and beaches of this land of fantastic colour and sound all appear to be in the grip of a perpetual spring. Paradise enow.

Of the size of Ireland, Sri Lanka lies five to nine degrees above the equator and almost midway between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. It is a land of diverse faiths and holy to many. Adam's Peak in eastern Sri Lanka is perhaps the earth's loveliest landfall and the world's most sacred moun-

The Sinhalaes as well as the Tamils claim to be the original rulers of Sri Lanka



ASHOK VAHIE

tain because of the famous foot-print on it that many faiths revere. Muslim belief has it that Adam landed there on his fall from the Paradise. The Chinese connect the mountain with the father of the human race. To the Hindus the country's uplands are linked with the mythology of Vishnu's incarnation. Christian missionaries ascribe the mysterious foot-print to St Thomas, the Apostle. The Buddha is believed to have come to the island many times and left traces of his footsteps.

Aside from its plethora of faiths, Sri Lanka is also a country of racial diversity revealed in the frequency of eyes coloured from brown to blue, crinkly and smooth hair, flat and hooked noses. Proof enough that no racial stock has escaped mixture

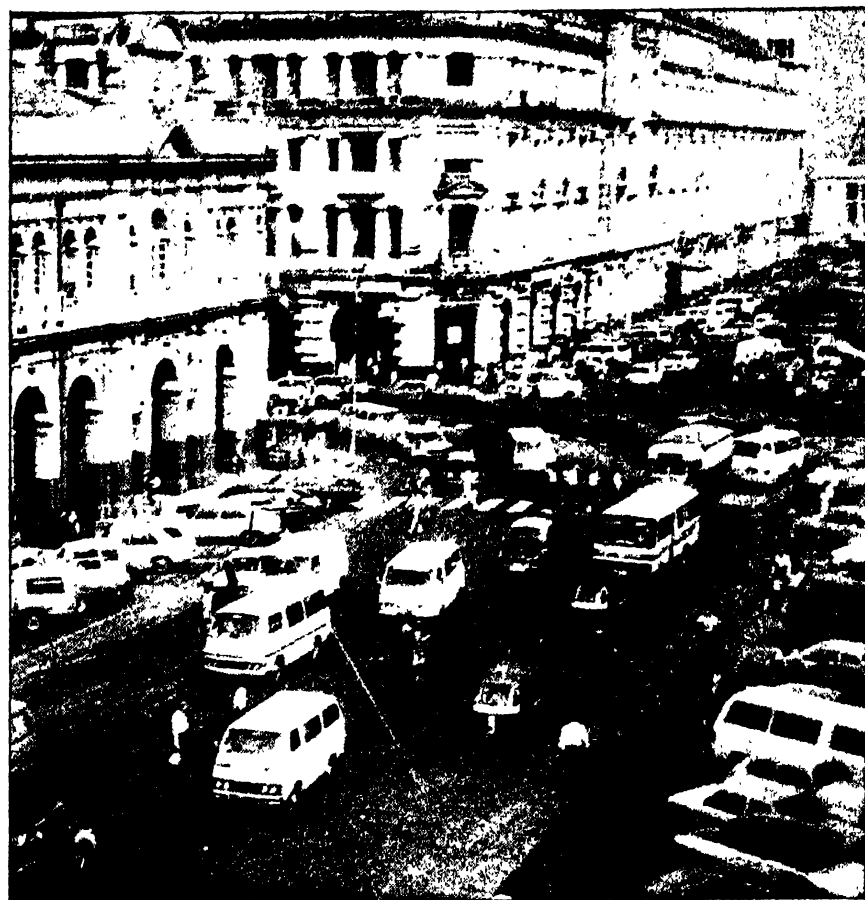
with several others.

The tranquility and apparent racial amity was destroyed in 1983. Anyone arriving in Colombo after the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, would have found it a shattered city in a fractured island. The explosion occasioned little surprise, however, for Sri Lanka, divided over language, race and religion, was close to combustion point in mid-1983. All it needed was a spark, which was provided by the abduction and rape of three Tamil girls and the killing of two secessionist guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Jaffna peninsula by Sri Lankan soldiers. In retaliation, the Tamil guerrillas drew a Sri Lankan army patrol out of its fortified camp in Palaly around midnight of 23 July. A false tip-off over the telephone did the trick, though the soldiers had been advised not to venture out at night. The patrol was ambushed and 13 soldiers were killed.

News of the ambush reached Colombo the next day and set off an anti-Tamil pogrom, the worst in the island's history, in the Sinhala-majority areas.

The complexities of the island's ethnic conflict go deep into history. Buddhist

A young Tamil guerilla: bloody war for identity; (right) a view of Colombo before the conflict: shattered capital



legends and mythology have it that the Sinhala race was founded by Vijaya, grandson of the union between a petty north Indian king and a lioness. Banished by his father for misconduct, Vijaya is believed to have arrived in the island in 500 BC with a band of 700 fair-skinned Aryans. The Sinhalaes say the name of the race is derived from the legend of the lioness (*Sinha* in Sanskrit means lion).

Mythology also emphasises the fact that Vijaya's arrival coincided with Gautama Buddha's *nirvana* (the final

release from the cycle of reincarnation—attained by the extinction of all desires—and individual existence culminating in absolute blessedness). It is claimed that the Buddha had visited the island thrice and this legend is the basis of the Sinhala claim that, as Aryans from north India, they have inherited a much older culture and civilisation than the Tamils who are descendants of Dravidian settlers from peninsular (south) India.

But the Tamils claim they inhabited the island before Vijaya's arrival and that Buddhism came to the island long after the Sinhala king and not with him. A Tamil kingdom was centred in Anuradhapura until the defeat of Eelala or Elara in 101 BC by a Sinhala prince Dutthagamani. Eelam, the name of the homeland the Tamils claim, derives from Elara, the last Tamil king of Anuradhapura which became the seat of a Sinhala dynasty after 101 BC.

In the absence of continuous recorded history, little is known of the Tamils after Elara's defeat. Pali chronicles speak only of the struggles between Sinhala kings and Tamil invaders. But a Tamil kingdom emerged around AD 1215 in Jaffna in the north. Sinhalaes say the kingdom was a peripheral one, a result of the national dissension and



Anyone arriving in Colombo after July 1983 would have found it a shattered city. Sri Lanka was close to combustion point in mid-1983



chaos at the time. To the Tamils, however, the period when their northern kingdom flourished was a golden age until western colonialism ended it.

The Portuguese were the first to come from the West, in 1505. The Portuguese found three sovereign kingdoms, one of the Sinhalas based in Kotte near present-day Colombo which ruled the south and the west, another in present-day Kandy ruling the central highlands, and a Tamil kingdom based in Jaffna ruling the Tamil-speaking areas of the north and the east.

The Sinhala and Tamil areas had distinctive social formations, languages and cultures and to all intents and purposes were distinctive nations.

The Portuguese entered into treaties and fought battles. They brought the Kotte kingdom, and later the Jaffna kingdom, under them but ruled them as separate entities. The Kandyan kingdom defied the Portuguese (1505-1658) and the Dutch who followed them (1658-1796). The British who expelled the Dutch in 1796 could annex Kandy only in 1815 though the rest of the island had been a Crown Colony since 1802 when the Tamils had ceased to be ruled as a separate entity.

For the first time the British brought the island under a unified structure and a centralised administration. The history of modern Ceylon begins at this point.

The British ushered in a plantation economy which transformed the island's subsistence agriculture. The plantations dispossessed Kandyan farmers of their land. But, as the farmers refused to work as wage labour in the plantations, the British turned to low-caste, debt-ridden and impoverished labour from the drought-prone Tamil districts of India to provide the sinews of the new economy. The indentured labour from across the channel were little more than serfs, initially in the coffee plantations where the operations were seasonal, and when coffee failed due to plant disease and tea became king, in tea estates which needed labour round the year.

Soon the immigrant Tamil plantation labour outnumbered the indigenous Tamils (who, like the Kandyan farmers, would not work in the tea gardens though segments of the Sinhala and Tamil populations had reluctantly begun participating in the plantation economy).

Soon the British began the time-honoured colonial game of playing one section off against the other to ensure their hegemony. The emergence of new professions and new elites made this

possible. The British rulers encouraged the Tamils who belonged to the arid, infertile and underdeveloped tracts of the north and the east, to look to the English systems of education and professions for economic advancement, all the while looking to their own interests of course.

Numerically, the indigenous Tamils were unequal to the Sinhalas. But the recognition of Tamil claims to a share of the professions was a major concession to the Tamils and therefore a counterpoise against the Sinhala majority. Thus the ethnic Tamils, at least the section which had acquired a stake in the system, were won over by the British who all the same had little interest in granting a responsible government to the people of Ceylon. They believed in ensuring their paramountcy through cheap concessions now and then to the educated sections and the intelligentsia.

After universal adult franchise was introduced in 1931, the legislative council was so constituted (in 1933) that its non-official (that is, elected membership) had distinct categories—Burghers (the descendants of Europeans), Sinhalas, Tamils, and Europeans. This began the trend of leaders of social groups assuming distinct postures in politics.

From unfettered Crown rule under a Governor, the island evolved through a limited franchise representative government with limited powers, to a semi-responsible government under an adult franchise system (with both elected and nominated numbers in the legislative council), to responsibility and independence in 1948.

But Ceylon's attaining of independence had none of the excitement of a struggle, violent or non-violent. It lacked drama. In fact it was a by-product of India's freedom struggle (which began with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885), and the British decision to quit the South Asian subcontinent after the Second World War.

Don Stephen Senanayake, a Cam-





(Clockwise from left) Mrs Gandhi with Mrs Bandaranaike; S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike; S. Thondaman; Mrs Gandhi with Dudley Senanayake; Nehru with Sir John Kotelawala: sitting on an ethnic volcano



bridge-educated politician, formed the right-of-centre United National Party (UNP) in 1946. Such a party was needed to work the cabinet system envisaged by the Soulbury reforms. His party won the 1947 elections, and found itself ruling Ceylon, when the British left in 1948 (without negotiating an accord between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority or without even creating the constitutional mechanism to promote co-operation and compromise between the two races).

The first major conflict that arose in the newly independent nation was over the residents of Indian origin. The Soulbury constitution did not define citizenship of Ceylon. When the British left, the island had Sinhala, Ceylon Tamil, Burgher, Ceylon Moor (Muslims), Tamil-speaking Muslim and Tamil inhabitants, besides others of Indian origin.

Among the early enactments of the multi-ethnic, but Sinhala-dominated, UNP government was an act to deprive most residents of Indian origin of their

right to citizenship, (by rendering them 'stateless') and franchise.

The Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948, together with the Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act of 1949, provided that citizenship would be determined either by descent or by stringent conditions of registration. There was no provision for citizenship by birth or by virtue of the country's membership of the British Commonwealth.

Citizenship by descent was contingent on proof of three generations of paternal ancestry in the island. The registration of births began in Ceylon only in 1985. Therefore, it was impossible for an applicant to prove the birth of the paternal grandfather and of the paternal great-grandfather. Most plantation workers did not have their or their parents' certificates of birth. Although the laws applied to all those who lived in the island, only the Tamils of Indian origin were called upon to establish their claims to citizenship. Most of the 237,034 applications (that is ninety per cent of them) requesting citizenship from among 825,000 persons of Indian origin, were rejected because they were not backed by evidence of date of birth or because they failed to establish that the applicants were residents for the requisite period or did not prove that they had an assured income of a reasonable amount. Many of the applications were rejected on flimsy grounds such as the illegibility of the signature of the Justice of Peace attesting them.

Compounding their sins, the Senanayake government disenfranchised the 'stateless' immigrants. An amendment to the electoral law in late 1949 restricted voting rights to citizens. The plantation labour had voted at every election. (100,000 of them had been registered when adult franchise was introduced in 1931 and the number rose to 145,000 in 1936. A 1946 order had provided that every British subject resident in the island for six months or who was otherwise qualified could vote and hold office.) But now non-citizens could not vote.

The plantation workers, the most organised and cohesive section of the island's working class, were sought to be isolated from the political mainstream for two reasons. If they got citizenship rights, they would also get the right to vote and might return Indians to Parliament from the plantation districts. The immigrants were a decisive minority in some other districts. So the Sinhala would be 'swamped'. Also conjured up was the bogey of Indian 'expansionism' with the immigrant Tamils as its 'fifth column'.

The two measures were overtly racist. The Indians were the immediate target but there was a danger of similar discrimination against other minorities who had been accepted as Ceylonese. The statements made by elected officials at this time did nothing to allay the fears of the minorities. A. Ratanayake, minister for food in the then government, and a Kandyan Sinhalese, even alleged that S. Thondaman, leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress, which represented the plantation Tamils, had a vision of Ceylon "federated with India, dominated by India, overwhelmed by India", and they had to rationalise the composition of the country's nationals because "freedom we have won is already in danger".

The attack on immigrant Tamils was over citizenship and voting rights. The Ceylon Tamils, though unaffected by the overt discrimination against the immigrant community, feared that it would extend to them in some other form. S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, leader of the Tamil Congress (founded in 1944 to represent the ethnic Tamils), said: "Today justice is being denied to Indian Tamils. Some day in the future, when language becomes the issue, the same would befall the Ceylon Tamils." His words were prophetic.

Other issues had still to be settled. For a start the newly free country had not come to grips with the language issue yet. English was still the official language though the minority spoke Sinhala. But the assault on the language rights of the Tamil minority was to begin soon.

Some politicians were quick to see the opportunities in the ferment. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the Oxford-educated son of an Anglican Christian knighted by the sovereign, became a Buddhist out of political expediency. He quit the UNP, still led by the Anglicised elite, to form the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 1951. The new party directed its appeal to the emerging sections aspiring for a share of political power—the rural elite (landlords and rich farmers), school teachers, Buddhist monks and practitioners of *ayurveda*. Its ideology was left-of-centre and its orientation Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist. Radical rhetoric and Sinhala chauvinism were invoked by it to win the support of the sections of the polity which had no links with the plantation economy that had produced the Anglicised elite. The British had ruled the island through this elite which was content to shape policies to advance its own economic interests. But independence had roused new expectations

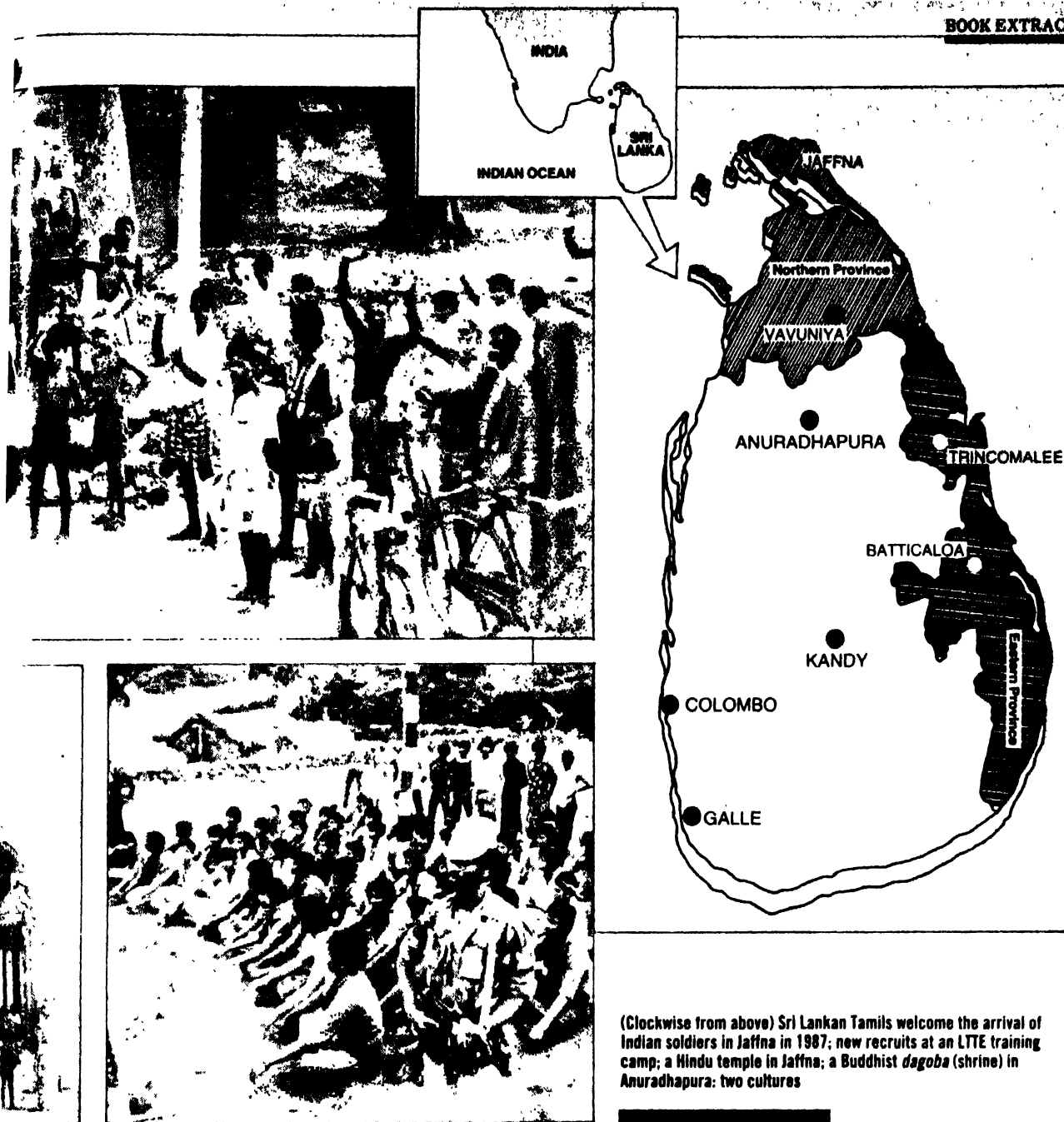


The 1972 constitution stopped short of proclaiming Buddhism the state religion or declaring Sri Lanka a theocratic state. But it conferred a special status on Buddhism

and the power of the vote had acquired a new significance.

The SLFP was too new to be able to make language the issue at the 1952 elections. But there was already a snowballing demand for the replacement of English by *swabasha* (own language). This issue got more complicated when Prime Minister John Kotelawala sparked a controversy by promising parity of Sinhala with Tamil when English was phased out.

The English versus *swabasha* demand, which related to the replacement of a foreign language, was more or less acceptable across the board. But the parity of Sinhala and Tamil concerned the relative status of two indigenous languages. The *swabasha* demand epitomised



(Clockwise from above) Sri Lankan Tamils welcome the arrival of Indian soldiers in Jaffna in 1987; new recruits at an LTTE training camp; a Hindu temple in Jaffna; a Buddhist *dagoba* (shrine) in Anuradhapura: two cultures

mised the antagonism of educated and semi-educated Sinhalas who felt the dominance of English left them at a disadvantage in education and employment and was a corollary to their antagonism towards the Anglicised elite who ruled the country through its command of English.

In sum, the Tamil-Sinhala parity issue was substantially more sensitive. At its inception, the SLFP had called for the parity of Sinhala and Tamil. By the end of 1955 it was advocating the primacy of Sinhala as the sole official language in the place of English. But the UNP was for parity. So were the main left parties, the Lanka Sama Samaj Party (LSSP) and the Communist Party of Ceylon.

The 1956 elections were a watershed

both in terms of the country's political development as well as a preparation for the ethnic issues that would have a decisive impact in the future. The UNP and Philip Gunawardene's Viplakari Lanka Samaj Party campaigned for Sinhala as the sole official language.

Among the earliest measures of the new government, headed by Bandaranaike, was the 'Sinhala Only' bill in the year of the Buddha Jayanti, the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's *nirvana*, an event which was sought to be vested, in Ceylon, with triple significance—the founding of the Buddhist faith, the founding of the Sinhala race and the arrival of Buddhism in the island. The year-long Buddha Jayanti celebrations heightened the tension over language.

In early 1957, Sinhala mob attacks on Tamils grew frequent and serious. The government added to the tension by insisting on the use of the Sinhala character 'Sri' on the number plates of all motor vehicles. The Tamils defied the order and instead used the Tamil letter 'Sri'.

That the polarisation of the different groups in the island had reached a new high is perhaps best shown by the way each of them reacted to 4 February, 1957: the Sinhala celebrated as that was the day Sinhala had triumphed over English, but to the Tamils it was a day of mourning because their language had been denied parity with Sinhala. ■

Sri Lanka. The Fractured Island by Mohan Ram
Published by Penguin Books India. Price Rs 50

BUSINESS HOUSES

The Pauls carve up

The Apeejay group's assets are split peacefully

Indian business houses appear to be caught by a new virus: splitting. Close on the heels of so many other industrial houses which have parted ways in recent times, the Paul brothers of the Apeejay-Surrendra group have now decided to divide their empire. If the corporate world was surprised by their decision, it was because of two reasons: one, the four Paul brothers had always believed in the primacy of the joint family in business. The other reason is the quiet suddenness of the division, sans the ugly mud-slinging in the case of the Modis who had made a spectacle of themselves. The four brothers agreed to an amicable and unanimous partition of the group's assets at a recent meeting in the capital.

The assets of the Apeejay group have been divided among the three brothers resident in India—Stya, Jit and Surrendra. Swraj Paul, who emigrated to Great Britain more than two decades ago to set up his own industrial empire under the Caparo Holdings plc umbrella, remains outside the purview of the present division of assets. However, Swraj was present at the deliberations in the capital to help in the smooth transition to the new set-up.

In effect, the division is between eldest brother Stya on the one hand and second brother Jit, and Surrendra, the youngest, on the other. The Apeejay Group thus remains sans the companies now transferred to Stya, who has only one child, a daughter. Stya, however, refuses to admit that there has been a division of assets. The other brothers, too, maintain that they are a close-knit family and the current division was effected only to ensure that Stya's only child got a fair share of the assets.

The assertions apart, Stya Paul gets Martin and Harris, a Calcutta-based pharmaceutical company which till now was being looked after by Jit Paul, besides another Calcutta-based drug company, Walter Bushnell, as well as several smaller pharmaceutical outfits in Bombay. He also gets the plum Surrendra Industries in Bombay, which has about 120 acres of land in the Bombay-

Thane belt, steel rolling mills, one mini steel plant and a tube-making factory. The vast lands will obviously place a substantial amount of funds in the hands of Stya, especially since the company is privately owned.

Stya Paul's entire share of assets are expected to pass on to his daughter, Sushma Berlia, whose husband, Vijay Berlia is a Bombay-based businessman. She has already been inducted on the board of Martin and Harris as a prelude to her taking over charge of her assets. Although Stya Paul maintains that Mrs Berlia will be working under uncle Jit Paul, it is now clear that the latter has relinquished control of this company as well as Walter Bushnell.

A line of demarcation has also been drawn between the shares of Jit and Surrendra Paul. Jit gets Flury's, Magnolia and Apeejay House in Calcutta as well as Steel Crete Ltd. Jit has been the corporate strategist behind the emergence of Apeejay as an important indus-

trial house in the country. A substantial portion of the group's land and other immovable properties will also go to Calcutta-based Jit, besides a number of small units.

Surrendra Paul, the youngest brother, gets the prestigious Park Hotel chain with its three properties, in Calcutta, New Delhi and Visakhapatnam. He also gets the group's two shipping lines—Surrendra Overseas and Apeejay Lines. With the recent acquisition of two new ships—which has raised the tonnage to 2.15 lakh tonnes—the two shipping outfits have been raking in money. The steel rolling mills in Calcutta and Durgapur also go to Surrendra. He will also continue to manage the three sterling tea companies—the blue chip Assam Frontier, Empire Tea and Singlo. The sterling shares of these companies are held by Caparo Holdings and thus the ownership of the tea companies remains with Swraj Paul. Apeejay is the fourth largest tea producing group after

(From left) The Pauls: Surrendra, Jit, Stya and Swraj



Macneill and Magor, Tata Tea and Assam Company, and produces 23 million kg of tea annually. In fact, Assam Frontier is among the most profitable tea companies in India, and declared a dividend of 50 per cent for the nine-month period ending March 1989.

The management of the Apeejay group was restructured in 1982. Till then, Styra was the chairman of the group and Jit functioned as the managing director. In 1982, the two older brothers stepped down from formal control. Surrendra emerged as the chairman and managing director of the group while Styra and Jit continued as advisers. In fact, Styra was not involved in the day-to-day management for a long time. Since then, Jit has been associated more with the general financial management of the group's affairs and Surrendra with the day-to-day management.

Apart from its corporate assets, the group runs a string of schools which are primarily looked after by Styra. The schools have been left untouched in the carve-up and will be managed by the family trusts. Among the brothers, Jit does not have any children while Surrendra has one son and two daughters. In a tragic accident in New Delhi recently, Surrendra had lost a son. And the fact that the Pauls have not overcome this tragedy as well as the division in the family is obvious in Styra's remark, "We are a coherent group. We are short of people."

Anjan Roy/New Delhi



The corporate world is surprised by the division because of two reasons: the quiet suddenness of the decision, and the fact that the Pauls had always believed in the primacy of the joint family in business

COLLABORATIONS

Viva Jagatjit!

General Foods of the US selects Jagatjit Industries as its new partner in Kothari General Foods



The KGF coffee plant near Mysore (inset)
D.C. Kothari: selling off

The long search by US giant General Foods Corporation for a new Indian partner for its Madras-based joint venture, Kothari General Foods (KGF), appears to have ended with Kapurthala-based Jagatjit Industries, manufacturers of the well-known malted food drinks, Viva and Maltova. About six months ago, the K. K. Modi faction of the Modi Group had seemed to be the front-runner. But reports in the financial press about a fortnight ago stated that Jagatjit Industries had tied up a deal with General Foods. Before the Modis, R. P. Goenka had figured prominently in the discussions. At one stage, even take-over tycoon Manu Chhabria had approached General Foods. Chhabria had moved through Lazard Brothers, the renowned London-based merchant bankers.

D. C. Kothari, doyen of the wing of the Kothari Group which had originally tied up with General Foods to float Kothari General Foods, has partly confirmed that Jagatjit Industries will be the new Indian promoter in KGF. In an informal chat with some newsmen last week, Kothari said the deal between General Foods and Jagatjit Industries may be finalised in a fortnight or so. While he made no mention of the price

which Jagatjit would pay to take over the Kothari stake in KGF, reliable market sources say that a price of Rs 9.50 per share had been indicated during the negotiations. Though the KGF share is quoting at a little over Rs 12 on the Madras Stock Exchange, the purchase consideration will be much less because of the losses sustained by the ailing company.

The future had begun to look bleak for Kothari General Foods about a year ago. The project cost had increased by nearly 25 per cent, rising by Rs 8.65 crores to about Rs 43 crores. This was mainly because two soft drink products launched by the company, Tang and Ju-C, had bombed in the market. The products had to be subsequently withdrawn. All this resulted in the marketing expenses for

powdered food beverages overshooting the original estimate by a massive Rs 4.38 crores. In addition, the preliminary and pre-operative expenses for manufacturing these items as well as soluble coffee, the other main line of manufacture of the company, increased to Rs 8.55 crores against the original target of Rs 5.22 crores.

Even a year ago, Kothari General Foods was half-way on the road to becoming an apt case for the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR), euphemistically referred to as the hospital for sick industries. Today, KGF is half-way on the road to becoming a profit-making company. For one the financial institutions headed by the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) have pumped in additional rupee term loans of Rs 3.48 crores, converted an unutilised foreign currency loan of Rs 75 lakhs into a rupee loan, deferred interest for the year 1988-89 and rescheduled earlier loans. And General Foods Corporation itself brought in an unsecured loan of Rs 1.37 crores. All these have, for the present, stabilised the financial structure of the company to some extent.

But the major development that has turned the fortunes of the company is the increasing volume of export orders for soluble coffee which Kothari General Foods has been able to obtain from the USSR. Without this, no amount of financial infusions would have helped. The position is made clear in an analysis made by ICICI in July 1988 while deciding on the company's request for additional funds.

Said thereport: "The company's project has been considerably delayed on account of which the project cost has escalated significantly. The company's PFB (powdered food beverage) product, namely, Ju-C, has failed despite heavy spending on marketing, and as a result, the company decided to withdraw from the market for the time being. KGF proposes to relaunch Ju-C at a later date. The company has introduced Tang, the other PFB product, into the market, but has not met with success. Due to the above failures the company has been left with no option but to complete the soluble coffee project and export the same."

KGF has an installed capacity of 3,000 tonnes of freeze-dried soluble coffee. Fortunately, in 1988-89, it secured for the first time an order from the Soviet Union and was able to export 1,500 tonnes, thus working its coffee plant in Karnataka, at 50 per cent of its capacity.

Senior executives of the company say that in 1989-90 soluble coffee exports to



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the USSR will be 2,500 tonnes while a firm order has been obtained for 27,750 tonnes in 1990-91. KGF is also exploring markets in the United Kingdom and Australia, and is hopeful of exporting

about 400 tonnes of soluble coffee to these and other countries.

All these developments augur well for the cash flow position of the company, at least to the extent of wiping out its earlier losses. KGF has also not given up its plans for Tang and Ju-C. The problem with Tang is that the flavour base has to be imported, but the company has not been permitted by the central government to do so directly. Earlier, the flavour base was being imported through the mechanism of purchase of replenishment (REP) licences which was proving to be too expensive.

Kothari General Foods is now making efforts to get the flavour manufactured by an Indian company. Discussions are on with companies like Bush Boake Allen, but it looks like this will take quite some time to come off. Ju-C is being "reformulated" using different raw materials but this is also a medium-term exercise. So, for the next year or so, Kothari General Foods will have to stay afloat on its soluble coffee exports. The new India promoters will naturally want to beef up things. But the options appear to be limited.

R. Vijayaraghavan/Madras

JUTE

The white hope deliberates

Will Reginald Brealey be able to keep his promise of turning round the giant Titaghur Jute Factory?

He came on the scene very suddenly and was immediately hailed as the great white hope. Reginald John Brealey, an unknown Scottish businessman, had offered about two months ago to bail out the ailing Titaghur Jute Factory (TJF), the largest jute conglomerate in West Bengal. And the time of reckoning is now near. In the next few days, Brealey will have to take a decision that will decide the fate of the 20,000 workers of TJF. But the Scotsman is learnt to be in two minds.

Says an impatient Brealey, "Unless the court injunctions against my proposals for acquiring management control of TJF are removed, I cannot put in any more money." He adds, "We have already spent Rs 1.5 crores to get the mills working and worked out a rehabilitation and revival package. But this cannot be implemented unless the shares of TJF are transferred in my

R.J. Brealey: an ace up his sleeve?





The Angus Jute Mill: In bad shape

name." Opposing the transfer of shares is a group of creditors who want their dues cleared first. In fact, Brealey's tug-of-war with TJF creditors goes back to end-1988 when the Scotsman, a venture capitalist and more importantly, the chairman of the Sheffield United Football Club, burst upon the Indian corporate horizon to make a dramatic announcement. A shareholder of TJF since 1986, Brealey announced his intention to acquire 51 per cent of the stake in Titaghur Jute held by the Girdharilal Mehta family. This in turn would automatically vest control of the entire Thomas Duff group since TJF fully owns Victoria Jute and Samnugger Jute and has a majority stake in Angus Jute Mills, all of which come under the Thomas Duff umbrella. It was then generally believed that the deal would go through if the Reserve Bank of India gave its approval to the scheme.

But in end May, RBI cleared the purchase deal on the condition that certain stipulations would be adhered to. While permitting Brealey to buy 900,000 of the £1 sterling shares at 10 pence per

**In addition to the
Rs 7 - crore
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crores**

share, RBI stipulated that the buyer should not dispose of any real assets of the four jute units in the group and that he should invest at least £2.5 million initially over a specified period towards rehabilitation of these mills.

Hence the injection of Rs 1.5 crores by Brealey. However, that is not the end of the story. In addition to the Rs 7-crore rehabilitation package, Brealey

has to find funds for the accumulated liabilities of the group—a staggering Rs 100 crores. The group owes money to virtually everyone—the workers their wages and bonus arrears and the financial institutions their interest payments. And the raw jute suppliers, the biggest creditors, have reportedly moved the courts to restrain the transfer of TJF shares to Brealey before their dues are cleared.

Two pending court cases in the Calcutta High Court are not the only headaches that Brealey has to contend with. There is trouble back home too. Known in London stock-broking circles for buying "shell" stocks of companies, Brealey and his assistant were arrested in the UK on charges of insider trading on the London Stock Exchange last month. Brealey is believed to have acquired a large chunk of TJF shares on the London Stock Exchange at a much lower price—before he made his offer to the Mehtas. But says Brealey in defence, "The charges relate to 17,500 shares of Titaghur Jute that my assistant and I bought between 19 and 23 May, and the objections are purely on technical grounds. The charges are under investigation at the moment. I will know the outcome on my return to the UK."

With so many problems on different fronts, why then does Reginald John Brealey covet TJF? All that he is willing to say for the present is, "I have something that no one has. I will tell you once I get control of the management of the company." That is not saying much for the present, but the enigma, it is hoped, will be cleared in the coming weeks. Till then, the workers of TJF can only pray that their white god will be true to his words.

Debjani Sinha/Calcutta

BANKS

Marketing is the key

Foreign banks vie with each other to woo customers with easily encashable fixed deposit schemes

It all began three years ago when foreign banks were outdoing each other to spruce up their offices—the best marble, pile carpets, soft lighting, and dapper executives behind teakwood desks. Then came the services—cheque books with the account holder's name printed on them, account executives advising individual clients, computerised accounts mailed home, and auto-

matic teller machines. All this was heavily advertised, and aimed at drawing customers, with the hype being "we are user-friendly, come to us".

The emphasis has always been on innovation, tuning around even standard Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regulations on banking practices with a touch of class—and marketing verve. Fixed deposit (FD) accounts seem to be the



current consumer banking fixation with all the big players—Citibank NA, Bank of America (BankAm), Hongkong Bank, Grindlays Bank and the Standard Chartered—trying to cash in on the money mill. All these banks are offering varia-

However, there is a major difference.

The foreign banks are pushing the FDs as a new product—with a suggestion that these are far better than the ordinary savings and current accounts—with cheque book facilities to withdraw upto 75 per cent of the deposited amount, and a provision for overdraft against the FD. All banks in India can offer the facility, but few are actually doing so. Says V. Shankar, business development manager, Hongkong Bank, New Delhi: "We (foreign banks) have constraints about opening branches and so forth. If we want to increase our deposit base and reach new customers, the only way is to offer newer services." Or old services in new packages.

The 10 per cent interest earned from the FD-linked accounts is double the interest that can be earned from a

things from the customers' point of view, and are more efficient. It's far more than just packaging a product. You have to be equipped to offer them."

Citibank led the way in 1987 with a barely disguised FD scheme, calling it the 'Unfixed Deposit'. It had the usual Rs 10,000 minimum deposit, and a current account cheque book thrown in. In October last, BankAm and Hongkong Bank followed suit with the 'Flexi Deposit' and 'Smart Money Deposit' respectively. Standard Chartered soon chipped in with its 'XChequer' scheme. The latest round of customer-wooing was spurred by the newest entrant, Grindlays, which unveiled its 'Easy Access' scheme a couple of months ago. Since then, with competition hotting up, Hongkong Bank has renamed its scheme the 'Smart Money Account'—a subtle change to make the offering appear more like a savings account than an FD. Citibank, too, has launched a new scheme called "Time Deposit", which breaks up the deposit in lots of Rs 1,000 for encashment purposes. The basis of all these schemes are exactly the same, with banks trying to outdo each other with advertising, glib talk and added frills.

There is a clear advantage for banks. They claim that they clear only 2 per cent if the customer encashes the FD, and that overheads reduce profits from such a venture to 1 per cent or even less. But the fact is that a customer usually does not break an FD, preferring to keep the whole amount intact. So, with one move, he is lured away from nationalised banks with the foreign banks capturing large chunks of funds. In turn, these are lent out by the foreign banks at higher interest rates—for 16 per cent or more per year, depending on whether they are short or long-term loans—to businessmen and corporations. The bait appears to be working.

All banks claim that most of their FD holders are new customers, with estimates ranging from a new customer to existing customer ratio of 50:50 for BankAm to 95:5 for Hongkong Bank. Investor profiles are solidly middle-class: junior executives and managers, small businessmen, armed forces officers and even housewives.

Says an executive of an American bank in New Delhi: "Our target audience are people who keep their funds idle in nationalised banks." If nationalised banks do not gear up soon, they may find even more of their business slipping away from them, when they could have done exactly what the foreign banks are doing.

Sudeep Chakravarti/ New Delhi

HOW TO STRETCH YOUR DEPOSIT WITHOUT BREAKING IT

CITIBANK
Consumer Services Group

Smart Money Account

That's what you are when you earn 5% more on your savings account

Earn higher interest and the freedom to withdraw...

Brochures of the fixed deposits: new-fangled schemes

tions of the same theme: minimum deposits of Rs 10,000 for periods upto three years, with interest earned ranging from 8 per cent for less than 12 months, to 10 per cent for three years. Nationalised banks, too, offer the same services but strictly within RBI norms.

A customer can keep the FD untouched if

he wishes, or withdraw money from it with no problem...

An emergency bailout would take minutes with the foreign banks while nationalised banks would take a week for the same service

regular savings account. Moreover, overdrafts from these accounts attract a 12 per cent annual interest as the bank's fee, technically just 2 per cent more than the amount earned by the account holder. And even if a person were to withdraw the maximum allowed—three-fourths of his account—he would still be earning interest on the remaining funds at 10 per cent.

So, at one stroke, a customer can keep the FD untouched if he wishes, and, on the other, withdraw money from it with no problem, and a negligible amount of paperwork. While a trouble-free emergency bailout would take minutes with the foreign banks, a nationalised bank would take anything between two days to a week for the same service. Says Shankar: "They (the nationalised banks) can't offer this. For one, there is lack of computerisation. We look at

SEBs vs NTPC

If the acute countrywide shortage of power is a source of worry for the mandarins in the Planning Commission, the supply of power itself can often be a bone of contention. The parties battling it out this time are the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and the north Indian state electricity boards led by the Northern Region Electricity Board (NREB). The issue is not of



NTPC's Korba thermal plant power supply but tariff. The NREB, which coordinates the supply of power from NTPC's Singrauli plant to the Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan SEBs and the Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking, has unilaterally reduced the power tariff. NREB's reason: NTPC's plant load factor has gone up substantially over the years, and so the tariff should be cut

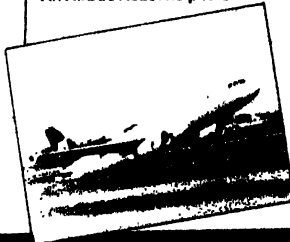
to enable the SEBs to share in the profits. But NTPC's counter is equally strong: it is justified in demanding a higher tariff because the capital costs of its new project have increased steeply. NTPC also has another strong case against the SEBs: outstandings to the tune of Rs 600 crores. Is NTPC now going to hit back at the northern India SEBs? The stage is all set for a power-ful battle.

Piloting an exodus

Indian Airlines continues to fly in rough weather, unable to tackle the turbulence within. On the one hand, IA has already set in motion its huge Rs 1,600-crore project of acquiring 31 wide-bodied latest technology Airbus aircraft. However, on the other, it is confronted with a serious problem: a potential exodus of its seasoned pilots. Reportedly, 27-odd IA commanders have put in their papers so that they can take up more lucrative offers with foreign airlines, especially in the Middle-East and the Far East. While most of them make around Rs 25,000 a month here, their foreign assignments would ensure them a hefty pay packet of anything between Rs 60,000 and Rs 1 lakh-plus.

The IA management has every reason to be concerned. These commanders

An Airbus A320: no pilots



are from its Boeing 737 fleet and were expected to be inducted for the Airbus A 320. While their desertion may affect the Airbus induction plan, in the longer term it will turn out to be a bigger loss for the airline as it takes almost Rs 10 lakhs to train up a pilot. Looks like the IA authorities may now have to resort to drastic and unpalatable decisions to check the exodus.

A flavour for marketing

In the international market just flavour and liquor are not enough. The Tea Board has realised that marketing strategies are just as important if you have to sell the cup that cheers. The Darjeeling logo launched some months ago has been quite a success. And now, it is the Assam logo. The design has been selected and the Tea Board has earmarked Rs 60 lakhs for introducing the Assam logo in the UK and other European countries to begin with. Tea packeters can use the logo on packets containing 100 per cent Assam tea.

The Tea Board is also toying with the idea of launching a national brandname for teas sold in the Western markets. The name: India Gold. The Tea Board will have exclusive rights to the brandname which can be used by tea exporters for top-quality packet teas. The scheme will be a flexible one in that the exporters are free to choose the blend in keeping with their target market. It could soon be cheers for the famed Indian brew once again.



Bread and bullets

Police fire on hungry tribals who try to loot a food godown

TRIPURA

On 27 July this year, when about 500 starving tribals staged a demonstration at Damcherra, a sleepy little town in north Tripura and stormed a well-stocked government food godown, they faced a hail of bullets.

Tripura faces food shortages for a few months every year and this summer was no exception. The practice of *jhum* (slash-and-burn technique) cultivation ensures food supplies for the tribals for about five months each year. During the remaining critical period, the government usually steps in with food-for-work programmes to help people tide over their difficulties. During the last two months, the Opposition in the state had been complaining about food shortages and the government, too, admitted that there was a fall in central supplies and did its best to rush grains to the deficit areas. But a severe crisis was created by problems that lay elsewhere: the corrupt owners of fair price shops, on whom the public distribution system rests, sold off hundreds of kilograms of rice in the blackmarket and smuggled out large quantities to Bangladesh, where the grain is perennially in short-supply.

The stock position of grains in the Damcherra godown was good on the day the trouble broke out. There were 110 tonnes of ordinary rice and 13 tonnes of fine rice, and the 123 tonnes in all were good enough to feed all the people in the adjoining villages for about three months. But the ration shop owner, Biman Roy, had been unusually tight-fisted in distributing the grain. Papu Singh, who happens to be one of the shop's registered customers, was given only 7.5 kgs of rice between March and July, a pittance for a family of six.

Giving an indication of how grave the food situation was, former chief minister Nripen Chakraborty of the CPI(M) said his party had information that there had been 21 starvation deaths in the state's far-flung tribal hamlets like Kanchanpur, Chaumanu, Krishnapur and Dumbargar along Tripura's eastern border with

Bangladesh. Said Chakravarty confidently, "The CPI(M) holds three of the constituencies and has an extensive grassroots network in this area, so we know what we are talking about."

In fact, Chakravarty has expressed his dismay at the government's harsh reaction to the tribal agitation. "Never had this happened before he said, not even during the early Seventies."

The figures of starvation deaths provided by Bijoy Hrangkhawl, the Tripura National Volunteer (TNV) supremo, whose armed guerrillas used to operate along the state's eastern border not so long back, seem to corroborate the CPI(M)'s claim. "Between 10 to 20

(TUJS), an organisation of tribals aligned to the ruling Congress(I), feels that the "cause of the unrest cannot be wished away". Agriculture minister Nagendra Jamatia, who belongs to the TUJS, told SUNDAY: "Administrative lapses are at the root of the trouble at Damcherra."

The Congress(I), too, seems divided over its assessment of the crisis. Newly-elected Tripura Pradesh Congress(I) president Radhika Ranjan Gupta tends to feel that the food situation in the tribal areas was "alarming" while home minister Samir Ranjan Barman attributes the trouble at Damcherra to "CPI(M) mischief". According to Barman, "The tribals who gathered there on Thursday were not the hungry type, but a bunch of CPI(M) miscreants, out get my policemen."

The FIR (first information report) lodged by the officer-in-charge of Dam-



(Left to right) Tribals demonstrating in protest against the police firing; a woman who lost a member of his family in the firing; avoidable tragedy

tribals have died of hunger in this area," says Hrangkhawl, and complains that "the state government is paying no attention to the condition of the *jhumias*."

Even the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity

A severe food crisis was created by owners of ration shops who sold hundreds of kilograms of rice in the black market and smuggled large quantities of the grain across to Bangladesh

cherra police station, Manoranjan Debbarma, states that over 500 tribals, led by four "local leaders", had gathered in front of the police station, demanding rations, at 11 am on 27 July. Debbarma assured the crowd that the matter would be settled by the sub-divisional officer (SDO), who was expected to arrive soon. But when the official failed to turn up even in the late afternoon, the crowd began to grow restive. The tribals were demanding two kgs of rice per head, said one police officer.

As tension began mounting, the Damcherra police station sought reinforcements. By 4.30 pm, a contingent of CRPF jawans arrived to beef up security arrangements. The appearance of the CRPF on the scene seemed to have angered the hungry crowd, which surged towards the food godown, barely

100 metres away, and tried to break in. "The women were the most militant of the lot," said a policeman who was on duty on the spot that day.

At around 5.30 pm, the police opened fire. A forest guard, two men and a woman—all tribals—died in the shooting, and eight others were injured. Police high-ups claim that seven of their men were hit by brickbats, lathis and sticks, though the FIR, at no place, mentions that the mob was armed. Nor does the report name the leaders who had supposedly organised the people and political observers feel that it is highly improbable that the police would have failed to identify the ring-leaders, if there were really any.

That the condition in the tribal areas had indeed become precarious was evident from food minister Motilal Saha's statement three days earlier in which he



admitted that the "food situation was far from satisfactory" and from the fact that chief minister Sudhir Ranjan Mazumdar was away in Delhi on that day trying to procure additional rice from the Centre.

Meanwhile, the CPI(M), TUJS and the TNV have demanded a judicial inquiry into the police firing. The CPI(M), in particular, insists that the probe be carried out by a sitting High Court judge because it feels the crisis at Damcherra was largely man-made. The CPI(M) party organ alleges that Biman Roy, the ration shop owner, has made a profit of nearly Rs 10 lakhs in one year by hoarding and selling rice in the black market.

If that were true, the administration may be faulted for having committed a major blunder by abandoning the carrot for the stick, when it could have easily defused the tension by doling out rice to people who were virtually starving.

Subir Bhattacharya/Agartala

The letter-bomb

H.N. Nanje Gowda's letter, criticising Rajiv Gandhi, leads to his expulsion from the Congress(I)

KARNATAKA

H.N. Nanje Gowda is a politician who loves to write letters. The Karnataka leader, who was expelled from the Congress(I) for 'anti-party' activities on 2 August, had written around 15 letters to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi before the disciplinary action was taken against him. Nanje Gowda, who resigned his Lok Sabha seat after his expulsion, prepared an elaborate statement for the press, in which he said: "My expulsion from the Congress (I) party has not come to me as a surprise."

Certainly not. In the past the Congressman from Hassan, Karnataka, had written to the Prime Minister urging him to release the unpublished portion of the Thakkar Commission report on the Indira Gandhi assassination case. Nanje Gowda also found fault with the Centre's "evasive tactics" on the question of the Bofors kickbacks such as forming a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to go into the matter. And he has been releasing these letters to the press without fail. Nanje Gowda was asking for it, and what is surprising is that the expulsion order did not come earlier.

That he was finally expelled is more a tribute to his sense of timing than an indication of belated toughness on the part of the Congress (I) high command. Nanje Gowda worded the letter to the Prime Minister in such a way that it was front-paged in most national dailies, and left Rajiv Gandhi with no choice but to expel him. The letter was provocative even by Nanje Gowda's standards. The six-page missive starts thus: "It is with a heavy heart and great anguish that I write this letter to you. Today two spectres are haunting our party—first, the spectre of the assassination of our beloved leader and revered mother Mrs. Indira Gandhi and second the spectre of the Bofors howitzer deal. On both these issues, our party and government have been adopting tactics which make our Opposition laugh, our party sad and our countrymen angry."

The letter used pointed words like

"conscience", "truth" and "guilt", which were plainly insulting to Rajiv Gandhi. The letter added: "It does not satisfy the intelligence of an Indian if a blanket claim is made: 'I have not shielded any of the assassins.' He pointed out that he had written on the subject thrice before and wondered why the Prime Minister was adopting an "ostrich-like attitude". Nanje Gowda dwelt at length on the Bofors issue. He wrote: "The reluctance to trace the real culprits in the case of the assassination of Indiraji is matched only by the diligent cover up of the real recipients in the Bofors deal...the theory that two old ladies in a tax haven received sixty four million dollars for the guns sold by



Nanje Gowda: unburdening his conscience

Sweden to the government of India half the globe away, to say the least, is an assault on the intelligence of the Indian people."

And Nanje Gowda could not have timed the shot better. While the Congress(I) appeared to be sinking in Parliament, Nanje Gowda emerged as an honest hero. Hassan, in Karnataka, is also the home district of the Janata Party leader, Deve Gowda, and like him, Nane Gowda, too, belongs to the powerful Vokkalinga community. Nanje Gowda's presence in the state's Opposition camp, therefore, becomes a matter of great significance. Whether in the Janata Party or in the Janata Dal, Nanje Gowda could influence like-minded Congressmen to quit the organisation. "Time is not far off when they too will make bold to unburden their conscience," he predicts.

Prakash Belawadi/Bangalore

Persona non grata

NTR disowns his son-in-law after he is accused of 'kidnapping' a child

ANDHRA PRADESH

N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) has disowned his son-in-law, Naren Rajan, who is married to NTR's youngest daughter, Uma Maheswari, created a lot of embarrassment for the chief minister by kidnapping the daughter of Uma Reddy, the wife of a city businessman and claiming that he was the "biological" father of the child.

Two days after NTR had successfully persuaded Opposition MPs to resign from the Lok Sabha in protest against the Union government's vituperation against the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) the family scandal became public. Uma Reddy filed a *habeas corpus* petition in the Supreme Court, charging Rajan with kidnapping her two-year-old daughter, Rashmi. What dragged NTR into the affair was the fact that the petition made the chief minister a respondent in the case.

The first time Rajan created a scene was in February this year when he, along with some of his musclemen, reportedly went to the house of the Reddy's in the posh residential area of Banara Hills and created a ruckus by demanding that the child be handed to him. But the people of the neighbourhood informed the police who were quite stunned to discover that the troublemaker was the chief minister's son-in-law himself. The police took no chances; senior officials rushed to the spot, bundled Rajan into their vehicle and dropped him at the NTR's residence.

NTR, however, rebuked the police for bringing Rajan to his residence, the reason being the estranged relationship between his daughter and her husband. Uma Maheswari came to know soon after her marriage, in 1985, of Rajan's "extra-marital relationship" and began living separately, though without obtaining a divorce, in the home of Dr Venkateshwara Rao, NTR's elder son-in-law and Rajan became a *persona non grata* in the chief minister's household.

According to some people, Naren Rajan used to claim that he was the real father of Uma Reddy's daughter. He was said to have had developed a deep attachment to the child as the

allowed Rajan to visit them quite frequently. But once they tried to distance themselves from Rajan, he tried to forcefully take away their daughter in February.

Uma Reddy's petition in the Supreme Court, however, tells a different story. According to her, Rajan wanted to adopt Rashmi as he could not consummate marriage. But when the Reddys refused to oblige, Rajan began to threaten them with dire consequences. Uma Reddy has told the court that after several futile kidnapping attempts, Rajan forced her to declare before a magistrate that she was his wife and Rashmi was his "biological daughter". Later, Rajan used this document to blackmail Uma Reddy. He allegedly sent it to her in-laws in an attempt to break up her marriage. Her petition claimed that Rajan had subsequently confessed in writing on stamp paper that he obtained the statement from Uma under duress.

Uma Reddy says that despite this declaration from Rajan, her in-laws turned her out of their house. She claims that when Rajan's efforts to kidnap the child failed, he resorted to guile. Rajan approached Uma at Bangalore's West End Hotel with the request that he wanted to show Rashmi to his father and that he would bring the child back that



Uma Maheswari (left) and Naren Rajan (right): broken marriage

very day. But Rajan failed to keep his promise and told Uma that Rashmi had been taken to Coimbatore to be shown to his mother. But as neither Rajan and Rashmi could be traced after that, Uma Reddy went to the Supreme Court pleading for urgent action as she feared the child may "disappear from the country itself." Responding to the petition, the court directed Rama Rao, Naren Rajan and the members of his family on 24 July to produce Rashmi before the court within two weeks.

Uma Maheswari filed a suit seeking divorce from Naren Rajan as far back as

Exit Rao Birendra Singh

The Union agriculture minister surprises the Congress(I) by suddenly announcing his resignation

It is not only Opposition members who have resigned from the Lok Sabha in the wake of the severe indictment of Rajiv Gandhi's government in the report submitted by the Comptroller and Accountant General (CAG). On 31 July, Rao Birendra Singh, Union agriculture minister and a respected leader of the Ahir community in Haryana, also tendered his resignation both from the membership of the Congress(I) as well as the Lok Sabha. The reason for his decision, he explained, was his unhappiness over the stand taken by the government on the CAG report, the failure of its policies on Sri Lanka and Punjab, and the non-implementation of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission.

Almost simultaneously, Anandi Charan Das, a suspended Congress(I) MP from Orissa, quit both the party and Parliament, accusing Rajiv Rao Birendra Singh: surprise move





in March, but it is only now that her legal move is being highlighted. The suit is not only an admission of the fact that her marriage has not worked, but the recent publicity it has received is intended to make it known that the Rama Rao family has distanced itself from Rajan. In fact, J. Chelameswar, an advocate who is representing both NTR and Uma Maheswari told SUNDAY that there was no point in keeping NTR as a respondent as Maheswari's divorce petition was filed long before the kidnapping took place, showing clearly that the chief minister's family could not have been involved in any way.

Mukundan C. Menon/Hyderabad

Gandhi of being "involved in the Bofors deal kickbacks". He sharply criticised Rajiv Gandhi and his advisers for having shown no regard for a constitutional authority like the CAG.

It may be recalled that Rao was among the ten Congress MPs who wrote to Rajiv Gandhi after the defeat of Sunil Shastri in the Allahabad byelection, criticising the party leadership. Among the others were Nawal Kishore Sharma, Prabhawati Gupta, Abdul Ghafoor, Harpal Singh, Kamakhya Narain Singh, Chimanbhai Mehta (suspended) and Rajmangal Pande who later left the party. Some of them like Abdul Ghafoor and Nawal Kishore Sharma are said to be biding their time before quitting. If Congressmen feel that the party is unlikely to be victorious at the polls under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, the resignations might increase from a trickle to a flood.

Kuldeep Kumar/New Delhi

Historic omissions

A district court directs the state government to correct its list of freedom-fighters

ASSAM

The government of Assam appears to have got its history wrong. In a landmark judgment, the district court of Kamrup has declared the list of freedom-fighters the state had prepared in 1979 to be erroneous and directed the government to draw up a new and "correct" list within two months in consultation with all political parties that had taken part in the freedom movement.

The judgment delivered by the assistant district judge of Kamrup, Justice J. Barua, came in a suit filed by seven freedom-fighters belonging to the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI), challenging the validity of the list. Justice Barua felt that the inquiry report on freedom-fighters published in 1979, which formed the basic document for awarding pensions and *tamrapatras* (copper citations) to them was full of errors and contained inaccurate information which caused "damage, loss and injury" to many of them.

Ironically, the 1979 report was prepared following largescale criticisms of an earlier list made in 1972 when the central government had decided to issue *tamrapatras* and give a pension of Rs 200 each to certain categories of freedom-fighters on the silver jubilee of India's independence.

The plaintiffs had complained that the committee that was entrusted with the job of preparing the 1979 report had adopted a "partisan outlook" and was biased in favour of those freedom-fighters who belonged to the Congress and ignored the sacrifices made by workers of other political parties in spearheading mass movements against the British in Assam.

The petitioners had pointed out that major events like the anti-war students' demonstration and the lathicharge on demonstrators in December 1941, the pulling down of the Union Jack in front of the Gauhati deputy commissioner's office by Padma Kakati that year, the massive anti-imperialist peasant rally held in November 1941, and the solidarity movements launched in support of

the naval mutiny in Bombay, and the police revolt in Bihar, had not been taken note of. The names of many famous freedom-fighters from Assam such as Bishnu Rabha, a much venerated folk hero, Chhatra Singh Teron, Loknath Barooah, and Saroj Kumar Sengupta did not figure in the report. On the other hand, the "glorious participation" of some of them had been derisively dismissed as "participation in subversive activities".

Another charge of the complainants was that the committee had ignored the Khilafat movement, in which Tarun Kumar Phookan, Nabin Bordoloi, Mohammad Saddulla and many others

The plaintiffs complained that the committee that was entrusted with the job of preparing the list of freedom-fighters in 1979 had adopted a "partisan outlook" and was biased in favour of the Congress

had participated. Many Muslims had taken part in the Khilafat movement "but in the report, it has been placed (*sic*) in such a manner as if these persons had never joined the anti-imperialist struggle and as if no Hindu had ever participated in the Khilafat movement... The report is tainted with communal bias", they stated.

Certain ludicrous aspects of the committee's report too were highlighted in the plaint. One was the inclusion of ineligible names in the list, the most glaring one being that of Sarat Chandra Sinha, a former chief minister of Assam and presently president of the Congress(S). Sinha was "falsely" shown as having been imprisoned for one year in 1921 in Dhubri Jail. The plaintiffs argued that Sinha was a child of just two or three years that year.

Apart from the court's directive to the state government to prepare a fresh list, the judgment is important because it exposes the rather limited perspective that is adopted in assessing the freedom movement, which is made out to be a struggle of and by the Congress.

Radhika Ramaseshan/Guwahati

The Patna connection

The CBI busts a smuggling racket involving a customs official

BIHAR Patna is not exactly a hot spot in the international smuggling route and that is why a Bombay-based gang chose to make it its centre of operations. The CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation) disclosed recently that in March this year, it managed to close in on the gang-comprising two brothers, Prakash and Pradeep Advani, and one Suresh Shukla—that was smuggling in sophisticated electronic equipments, including FAX machines from Singapore since 1987, depriving the country of revenue amounting to Rs 3.80 crores. And involved in this racket was the assistant controller of customs in charge of Patna airport, Madan Lal. In 1987 alone, 50 FAX machines were said to have been smuggled in through the airport.

During a surprise check in November 1987, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) confiscated several costly electronic machines from Suresh Shukla, who had declared them to be electronic toys and household appliances. On scenting a racket, the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigations) began scrutinising the passengers' lists for Patna-Kathmandu flights of the Indian Airlines and it was found that the Advani brothers and Shukla had made as many as 22 trips to Katmandu in 1987.

The CBI informed the DRI in Bombay of the matter. A raid on the residence and shop owned by the Advanis yielded a large number of unlicensed FAX machines, computer components and documents linking the Advanis with Madan Lal. Lal's house was also raided by the CBI and unaccounted property worth Rs 17 lakhs was unearthed.

The modus operandi of the smugglers was quite simple. Before flying to Singapore, they would get in touch with Lal and work out the details of the operation. On arriving at Patna from Singapore via Kathmandu, Madan Lal would accept the false declarations and let the machines they brought pass as toys and calculators.

Jalshankar Gupta/Patna

A tribe's tale of woe

Caste Hindus ostracise a tribal community that once lived by committing petty crimes

RAJASTHAN The Saansis of Rajasthan are demanding justice. On 18 July, 2,000 women and children belonging to the backward tribal community, marched through the streets of Jaipur in protest against the high-handedness of the caste Hindus of Bassi tehsil, about 26 km away from the state capital. They were demanding the arrest of men who had assaulted a group of Saansi men and women on 11 May and held them illegally in a local dharamsala.

Saansis training in agriculture, dairy farming, and are helping them run cottage industries. The activities of the society—which also runs an orphanage, schools, and organises medical camps for the economically weaker sections of Bassi tehsil—have brought about a sea-change in the ways of the Saansis. The tribals have virtually given up their life of petty crimes and have taken to earning an honest living.

But this reformation of the Saansis has upset the caste Hindus. Gone are the days when the Saansis could be exploited as casual labourers during the harvest season or at construction sites. The upper castes, helped by the police, who have now been deprived of their 'cut' of the stolen goods, found a subtle way of harassing the Saansis: everytime a theft was committed in the region, the tribals were invariably blamed for the act



(Left and far right) Women who were abducted and beaten up show the bruises on their bodies; (centre) the village of Visheshgaon: scene of violence

The caste Hindus not only attacked the Saansis, but, on the same day, they also beat up Alice Garg, a social worker of the Bal Rashmi Society who has been working for the uplift of the tribals for a number of years. Garg was waylaid by the miscreants while travelling to Jaipur with a Canadian delegation comprising students and teachers from Ottawa University who had come to see the society's work in Bassi tehsil. She as well as a few members of the team was manhandled.

Garg says that the Saansis were once an unruly lot, many of whom lived stealing foodgrains, cattle and household articles. But since 1981, members of Bal Rashmi Society have been giving the

and persecuted.

The event that led to the mayhem of 11 May happened two days earlier. The house of one Bhagwan Sahay, in Haarwari village, was burgled on the night of 9 May, and the Saansis of Visheshgaon, a nearby village, were suspected to have had committed the crime. Without waiting to verify whether their suspicion was right or not, a lathi-wielding mob, led by Sahay and others, stormed Visheshgaon and abducted six Saansi women and two men on the morning of 11 May. The captives were made to march three kilometres to Benada on the Jaipur-Agra highway and were locked up in rooms at Kalyanji dharmasala. And there, more brutalities followed. Soni, a

72-year-old woman was so ruthlessly beaten up that she was unable to sit up for the next 10 days; and when Anari, another of the abducted women, screamed for help when two men tried to rape her, she was hit on the face with a lathi. That same afternoon, Sahay's men stopped the bus in which Garg and her guests were travelling at Khedi village and assaulted them.

Said Garg: "Led by Ram Kishan and Bhagwan Sahay, they forced their way into the bus and pulled us out. They were were hurling obscenities at us all the while. Ram Kishan slapped me and tore my sari." Garg and her companions were then forced to drive up to the *dharmasala*, where Garg was made to write a letter addressed to the officer in charge of Bassi police station in which she was forced to implicate the Saansis named by Sahay in the theft case and also state that the stolen goods were still in their possession. "We were let off about two hours later with a final



A tribal woman collecting *tendu* leaves: earning more

A rich harvest

The state takeover of the tendu leaf trade yields a record profit

MADHYA
PRADESH

The government of chief minister Motilal Vora has proved that private traders are not indispensable to the *tendu* leaf trade. The leaf is used in making *bidis* and the government is all set to earn a record profit of Rs 200 crores, including royalties amounting to Rs 68 crores. The trade was nationalised last year by former chief minister Arjun Singh. The government's success has also absolved Vora of the charges levelled against him by Congress(I) dissidents, led by Singh, that he was acting hand in glove with the traders' lobby and that he lacked the political will to make the nationalisation a success.

The dissidents' suspicion stemmed from the fact that the government had, at one stage, thought of inviting tenders from the private traders for the purchase of *tendu* leaves even before the produce was gathered. The government, however, dropped the idea in the face of mounting opposition but went ahead with its plan of broadening the base of the tribal co-operatives by increasing their membership to 100 and

throwing them open to non-tribals.

The government succeeded in procuring 43.5 lakh bags of *tendu* leaves against a target of 56 lakh bags. In addition to the cooperatives, the chief minister is said to have had mobilised the state forest department and other government agencies in the procurement drive and increased the remuneration of labourers from Rs. 8.50 to Rs 15 per 1,000 leaves as an incentive.

While Vora seemed firm on making the state venture a success, the Chhattisgarh Tendu Leaf Traders' Association decided to boycott the tenders for the purchase of the leaves on the plea that its members would not be able to compete with buyers from the southern states—who were being particularly wooed by the Vora regime—and those from northern Madhya Pradesh. They demanded that a part of the produce be kept reserved for them and that they would be forced to shut down their *bidi* factories otherwise. The government refused to commit itself on this issue but assured the traders that they would have no cause to close down the factories.

Before the trade was nationalised, the *bidi* barons used to dictate the rates and even decide how the produce was to be distributed. This was done by the *tendu* leaf traders' association which knew how to keep the ministers and top bureaucrats happy. The traders' lobby not only



warning that if I ever tried to help the Saansis again or went to the police to report the matter, I and my family would be wiped off," said Garg.

The police, however, have a different story to tell. They allege that Bal Rasmi Society is seen by the local people as an organisation that is harbouring and protecting criminals and, hence, the resentment against them. Meanwhile, despite such charges as attempt to rape, kidnapping, indulging in violence and holding people in unlawful confinement being levelled against them, "the accused have been charged for minor offences, all of which are bailable," informs Garg. The law is, predictably, taking its own course—of shielding the upper caste Hindus.

Debjani Sinha/Jaipur

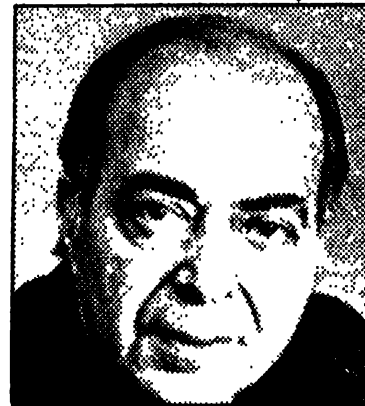
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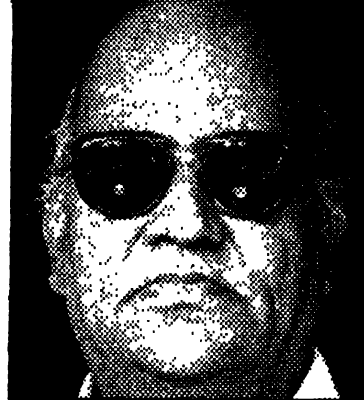
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Opposition leaders had predicted that the government would fail to handle the *tendu* leaf trade and that the state would suffer losses. But the government's emphasis on quality rather than quantity paid rich dividends

■

had its men within the Congress(I) but also among the Opposition parties. In fact, it is said that minister for forests Dr Kanhaiyalal Sharma was not very keen on implementing the government's programme and that chief minister Vora had to take the lead in realising the aims of the takeover.

Janata Dal president V.C. Shukla and BJP national secretary K.B. Thakare had predicted that the government would fail to handle the *tendu* leaf business and that the state would suffer huge losses. But the government's emphasis on quality rather than quantity paid rich dividends, for buyers agreed to pay twice the usual rates. Earlier, a standard bag of *tendu* leaves used fetch about Rs 400, but this year it sold at Rs 900.

The government's good performance has not, however, deterred Vora's detractors from trying to create troubles for him. Though the cooperatives played a minor role in this success story, Congress(I) dissidents are now demanding that the profits be distributed among the cooperatives. Earlier, during Arjun Singh's reign, the state government had nominated the office-bearers of the cooperatives and they were all said to have been Singh's men. Even the chairman and the vice-chairman of the State Minor Forest Produces Trade and Development Advisory Committee, which was supposed to oversee the *tendu* leaf business after the takeover, were Singh's trusted lieutenants. But Vora has, till now, shown no signs of yielding to pressure and has made it clear that the cooperatives were not entitled to a share of the profits made by the state but could only offer dividends to its members from the profits they themselves earned.

M.V. Khor/Rajpur

Coming of age

The popularity of billiards and snooker grows with the holding of the Asian championship in Delhi

DELHI

The green-baize game has truly come of age in India. If everything goes according to the plans of Indian cueists and sport promoters, then billiards and snooker might soon be among the most popular games in the country. The Sixth Asian Snooker Championship held in New Delhi gave every indication of this. Not only did Yasin Merchant become the first Indian to win the prestigious fixture, but the tournament ensured that India would remain on the world snooker and billiards map in the years to come.



Yasin Merchant: playing for high stakes

The popularity curve of the two sports had begun to rise a decade ago when the first exhibition matches were held in the capital. This was followed by India hosting the world amateur billiards championships in 1981 and 1985 and the Oscar Pro-Am Billiards Tournament in 1988. These matches also saw three Indians—Wilson Jones, Michael Ferriera and Geet Sethi—emerge on the international billiards scene. Their achievements were significant, but billiards and snooker were still thought of as a rich man's game.

Now, according to many cueists, billiards and its more competitive version, snooker, are attracting big money and generating public enthusiasms. "In the

next three years, I see snooker becoming the third most popular sport in the country after cricket and tennis," said Aushim Kheterpal, who runs Radiant Sports Management, the company which sponsored the Sixth Asian Snooker Championship.

It was a new cueing culture that was witnessed during the New Delhi championship. Doordarshan telecast eight matches, two of them live, and the response from advertisers was promising. The final, played between top-seeded Udon Khaimuk of Thailand and unseeded Yasin Merchant, drew huge crowds and saw hectic betting.

Yet another breakthrough was made when Brein Bennett, the chairman of World Billiards Promotion Council, announced that Radiant Sports would be hosting the grand slam tournament to be held every year in Delhi, Bombay, New Zealand and Singapore. The Radiant grand slam will be a four-card event

where top 12 cueists from the world are expected to participate. Each tournament, Bennett said, would carry a prize money of Rs 1.7 lakh.

However, according to members of the Billiards and Snooker Association, such stakes were not particularly high even by Indian standards. The prize money for the 1988 Pro-Am Tournament and this year's Asian Snooker Championship was close to Rs two lakhs. Players like Ferriera who have been complaining that it was only cricket, cricket and more cricket that the country was interested in should have nothing to be sore about any more.

Ritu Sartin/New Delhi

Spreading hatred

Communalism poses the greatest threat to the unity of India

It is a phenomenon that the country has lived with since Independence. Just before general elections, communal forces rear their ugly head, trying to cash in on the sentiments of the majority community. However, it is a tribute to our leaders that such divisive and dangerous forces have never succeeded in their gameplan.

With the elections round the corner, communal forces are once again at play. But what surprises me is the hesitation of the ruling party to fight these forces. Even those who are well known for their secular and bold stand are suddenly afraid of the 'Hindu backlash', of the prospect that the majority community may desert them during the polls. The concept of the Hindu vote itself is ridiculous. In that case, if the Muslim vote had been the deciding factor in Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto would never have won the elections.

In a democratic set-up, communal forces cannot sustain themselves for long. Although such forces have a lot of potential, they can be easily defeated. At least this is what Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have taught us. It is indeed a pity that in Nehru's birth centenary year, the forces of communalism are not being fought with vigour and determination.

Take, for instance, the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue. The fear of alienating the Hindus is so great among a section of the Congress(I) that they are yet to come out with a categorical statement on the controversy. The Opposition too is eager to bag the Hindu vote and that is why prominent Janata Dal leaders are putting pressure on V.P. Singh not to sever links with the BJP even though the latter has renewed its pledge of creating a Hindu *rashtra* and has advocated the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The result is that the Janata Dal is coming closer to communal forces such as the Shiv Sena, the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

The leftists and the Congress(I), it was expected, would fight unitedly against the polarisation of communal forces. But, sadly, the communists have been caught between power and principles and are hesitating to take a forthright stand. The Congress(I) too is divided on the issue: while the party's working committee has been passing resolutions condemning communal forces, many Congress(I) bigwigs are fighting shy of the monster. But history bears testimony to the fact that fence-sitters have always suffered in the long run.

Though India has largely been a country of the Hindus, the majority community has always been accommodating and tolerant in the past. Thus,

The fight for Ayodhya is only a symbolic fight. The real issue is not that of a temple or a mosque. By establishing their rights over the disputed place, Hindus want to prove that the country belongs to them

though Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Patel were all Hindus, they were never communal. Today, however, the open-minded Hindu society is under attack from regressive and obscurantist elements. These forces have only gained in strength as they are not being opposed sincerely.

No wonder, the Hindu communal forces have decided to make the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid controversy their election issue. But if the past is any indication, these divisive elements are bound to be defeated. After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, Hindu communal elements contested the 1952 general elections and tried to make an issue out of the Partition of the country. But the voters did not fall prey to their provocations and they were routed in the polls. Yet again, in 1957, communalists tried to make an issue out of the Hindu Code Bill. The Bill was even opposed by prominent Congressmen. And in the elections that followed, Prabhu Dutta Brahmachari contested against Nehru from the Phoolpur constituency. In the election speeches, Dutt lashed out against Nehru, accusing him of destroying the country's *sanatan dharma*. The resounding victory of Nehru gave a crushing blow to those who opposed the Bill.

But communalists never seem to be deterred by defeats. All they needed was an issue. And, in 1966, they found one: cow slaughter. The Jan

Bajrang Dal workers demonstrating in Delhi: all for a Hindu *raj*



Janagh and the Hindu Mahasabha gave a political colour to the question of preventing cow slaughter and for a time it seemed that the country would be plunged into turmoil. However, that was not to be and Indira Gandhi, who had come to power by then, dealt with the communal forces with a stern hand. The Bharatiya Kranti Dal led by Chaudhary Charan Singh also came out strongly against the communalists. In the 1971 general elections, the voters once again rejected the communalists and all those who allied with them.

It was during the reign of the Janata Party between 1977 and 1979 that Hindu communalists infiltrated the government-controlled media and the press in general. Some of these people occupy key posts in the government even today. The communalists however received a setback after the fall of the Janata government in 1979. Back in power, Indira Gandhi continued her attack against communal forces and Charan Singh too was critical of communal parties like the RSS. It was Indira Gandhi's stand against communalists that led many journalists at that time to assume that the Hindus would go against her party and vote for the Opposition. They were proved wrong, and in the general elections held in 1984 after the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, Hindu communalists were routed.

Who is to blame for Hindu communal organisations rearing their heads once again during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure? The Congress party itself and more specifically leaders like Arun Nehru. In 1985, Arun Nehru and his followers drafted a note to the party president suggesting ways to turn the Congress into a Hindu party. Although the proposal was promptly shot down, its sponsors continued to be active. The activities of Muslim communalists too during this phase helped organisations like the Vishwa Hindu

With the general elections round the corner, communal forces are once again at play. But both the ruling party and the Opposition are hesitating to come out openly against such dangerous and divisive forces

The Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid in Ayodhya: battleground for communalists



Parishad to spread its tentacles. To counter the propaganda of Congressmen like Arun Nehru, a number of Muslim Opposition leaders tried to whip up the sentiments of the Muslims. A fear psychosis gripped the members of the minority community, strengthening the Hindu Parishad further.

The Hindu communalists within the government became so powerful that they even succeeded in opening the locks of the disputed Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid. And after the gates were opened, the *pandas* of Ayodhya were so happy that they even invited Arun Nehru to contest the parliamentary elections from Ayodhya and assured him of victory. Today, with the general elections a few months away, these communal forces are once again raking up the Babri Masjid issue to whip up Hindu sentiments. As the communists have no base in the north, and the Opposition is in collusion with these elements, it is up to the Congress(I) to fight the communalists. But the question is: is the Congress(I) prepared to fight the decisive war? Or, is the party going to compromise with these forces for electoral gains?

In the prevailing atmosphere, Syed Shahabuddin's provocative statements and Muslim conferences have only weakened the secular forces and provided a fillip to communalism. I am not doubting the patriotism of Shahabuddin but a wrong step at this juncture could prove to be disastrous for the community. But it is a fact that Muslims today are far more tolerant than their Hindu counterparts. For instance, Muslims are prepared to accept the verdict of the court on the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid issue but the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has already declared that it will not accept any adverse decision.

But the fight for Ayodhya is only a symbolic fight. The real issue is not that of a temple or a mosque. By establishing their rights over the disputed place, the Hindus want to prove that the country belongs to them and the Muslims would have to dance to their tune. Muslims thus rightly feel that Babri Masjid is only the beginning. Many more such places of worship will be taken away to provoke them. In fact, even though Muslims are desperately trying to join the national mainstream, a powerful section of the majority community are preventing them from doing so.

Our mentality has become so distorted and communal that Indian intellectuals sided with Salman Rushdie simply because he was opposed by the Muslims. For the Indians, Rushdie became a symbol of the freedom of expression which was under attack. Making fun of historical personages only to prove oneself progressive does not constitute freedom of expression. I wonder what will happen if someone depicted Sita and Radha as prostitutes. Those who supported Salman Rushdie wanted to prove that Muslims are a conservative and backward lot.

The time has come to fight the communal monster before it devours the country. But the war must be waged with determination and grit. A half-hearted attitude will just not do. ■

The return of Pande

Why the controversial bureaucrat is back in favour

It is said that you can't keep a good, efficient man down for very long. And Vinod Pande, the powerful former revenue secretary, is proving the saying right. When V.P. Singh quit the finance ministry, two other bureaucrats fell with him—Bhure Lal, the portly former chief of the Directorate of Enforcement, and Vinod Pande. Not that the efficiency or the integrity of the two officers was ever in doubt. Both the men were shunted out of the key posts simply because they were closely associated with V.P. Singh.

But Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's advisors seem to have realised their mistake and there is a move to rehabilitate at least one of them: Vinod Pande. However, Bhure Lal continues to look after the lacklustre department of coins and currency in the ministry of finance. The Prime Minister apparently, now wants Pande made an officer on special duty (OSD) in the Cabinet secretariat—the post R.K. Dhawan was given when he was brought back. The PM's office has reportedly made a proposal to this effect and it is now before the Cabinet Committee on Appointments (CCA), which is yet to take a decision.

Why promote Vinod Pande? According to one version, Pande was largely responsible for the formulation of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and the Panchayati Raj Bills. He discussed these ideas with his former minister, V.P. Singh, when he was revenue secretary. Says a finance ministry insider: "Pande, like any good bureaucrat, is nobody's man." In an interview to a Bombay weekly, Syed Ashraf, a V.P. Singh loyalist, claimed that "V.P. Singh spoke about it (*panchayati raj*) several times. The Congress has copied it." If he did, says the finance ministry official, it is because Pande talked about it to V.P. Singh. So, the credit goes to him.

Even after V.P. Singh left the finance ministry, Pande never stopped working on the *panchayati raj* plan. Later, when he was transferred as secretary, rural development, he worked on the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana and *panchayati raj* proposals with renewed vigour. Mani Shankar Aiyar of the Prime Minister's Office closely followed Pande's progress. Aiyar worked with Pande on both plans, and was impressed with the former revenue secretary's dedication and hard work.

Soon, the Prime Minister and his advisers changed their mind about him. It is Aiyar who is known to have initiated the proposal to appoint him OSD in the Cabinet secretariat.

A topper from Allahabad University, the 57-year-old bachelor is a brilliant officer in his own right. He is a voracious reader and spends most of his salary of Rs 8,000 a month on books. "Go to his house," says an officer who

knows him well, "and you will find that you can barely see the walls of his study because there are so many books." Pande is an IAS officer of the 1955 batch who belongs to the Rajasthan cadre. He was brought on deputation to the Centre in April 1982 and subsequently worked as revenue secretary under V.P. Singh, when a series of raids were carried out on businessmen suspected of accumulating black money. After V.P. Singh was

Vinod Pande: hard work pays



ILLUSTRATION: SUBRATA GANGULY

moved from the finance ministry, he was transferred as secretary in the ministry of agriculture and rural development, where he has been since May 1987.

A finance ministry employee, who worked as Pande's PA, recalls, "He is very shy of publicity and hardly meets the press or grants interviews. Even when television teams come to shoot a function he is attending, he tries to keep out of sight or remain as inconspicuous as he can." His former PA also credits him with a remarkable ability to take quick decisions. "When he gave me something to type, it was always a final draft. He hardly made any changes, and if he had to, he wouldn't tell me to type out the letter again. He usually made the changes with his own hand." Other colleagues in the finance ministry re-

V.P. Singh: faith in Pande

Vinod Pande was shunted out of a key post simply because he was closely associated with V.P. Singh. But, now, Rajiv Gandhi's advisors seem to have realised their mistake and there is a move to rehabilitate him

member Pande as dynamic and indefatigable. A man who chose to do his work himself, rather than depute it to his subordinates.

Two of Pande's closest friends are P.C. Jain, who is on the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) and I.C. Dwivedi, a police official presently posted in Lucknow. Dwivedi is the official who was deputed to investigate the forcible sterilisations in the Turkman Gate area during the Emergency. The Janata government decided to award him a medal for his work and he was due to receive this in 1981. But the Congress(I) came to power in 1980 and, instead of rewarding him, the government assigned him to an insignificant post in Uttar Pradesh. All police officers who were similarly credited for their work on cases involving excesses during the Emergency were also denied medals.

A senior police official who knows Pande well narrated an anecdote about the civil servant. The official has a brother in the computer business. He wanted to sell his computers to an educational establishment in Rajasthan. Pande was posted in Jaipur then and was the officer who would take the final decision. So the official and his brother went to meet him in Jaipur. They explained the proposal to him. But Pande was unimpressed. He told them that he never liked the idea of using computers to do jobs that human beings could easily tackle. And as long as he was in charge there, he told the two men bluntly, he would never okay a move to instal computers.

When V.P. Singh became finance minister, he chose three officers to assist him. They were Vinod Pande, revenue secretary, J. Dutta, who became chairman of the Central Board of Customs and Excise, and Narayanan, who was given charge of the Income Tax department. Bhure Lal as chief of the Directorate of Enforcement gave them support in every way he could. All four officers were men of exceptional integrity, incorruptible and fiercely loyal to the finance minister. He took them into confidence and gave them *carte blanche*.

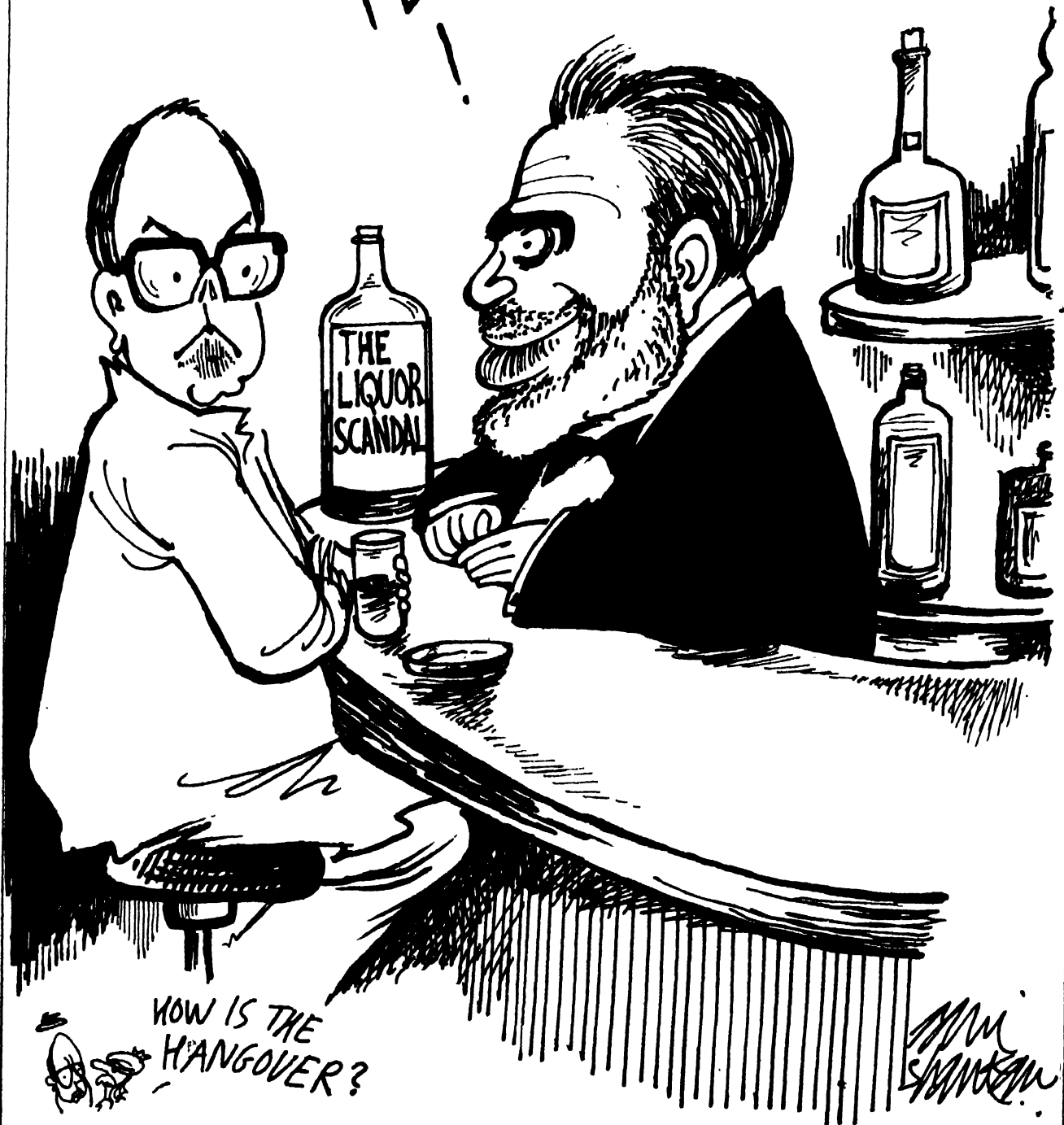
Vinod Pande's lesser known talent is his ability to see into the past and the future. An accomplished numerologist and astrologer, he is an officer who takes his hobby seriously. His former PA remembers politicians such as Makhan Lal Fotedar visiting him to have their futures read.

Asks a wag: "Was it astrology that got him where he is, or his ability as a bureaucrat?" Only Vinod Pande can tell.

Nirmal Mitra/New Delhi



OH, THE TIPS ARE
TERRIFIC!



HOW IS THE
HANGOVER?

The power of reason

Why radicals can also be humanists

To review *Reason, Romanticism And Revolution* by M.N. Roy is a tremendous task for a man like me. But I have made an honest effort to express my thoughts on the great philosophy contained in this book.

M.N. Roy was a revolutionary, who waged war with arms against British rule. In his early days, he was a great nationalist, then an ardent communist and founder member of the Second Communist International. A close associate of Lenin, he is one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century. However, Roy has never been only a man of thought but of action as well.

In this book, Roy traces the history of man—from his origin to the 20th century. He discusses most of the philosophies and philosophers of the West and East and ultimately radical humanism—a concept he evolved. This he projects as a solution for mankind, which is groping in the dark despite its achievements in science, technology, political systems and social orders.

Roy had his own ideas to contribute. Deeply disturbed by the half-truths and half-baked ideas which are misleading and dehumanising man, Roy focuses on the fact that man is essentially rational. And considering that man is the outcome of a biological evolution, he analyses mechanistic biological functions, which are manifested as instincts and intuitions. The author feels that since man has emerged from a law-governed universe, his rationality and sense of morality are expressions of cosmic harmony. And that, therefore, he is capable of living with others in peace and harmony. This leads Roy to the conclusion: "Sanction for morality is to be found in man himself."

Tracing the evolution of ideas, Roy points out that the Greeks considered man as the measure of everything. And that whenever man forgot this, he lost his rationality and brought misery on himself. But the man of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment reaffirmed his faith in an essential humanity, that is, the rationality of human beings. Marx made the mistake of forgetting man's rationality and concluded that class struggle would bring about the desirable changes. He held that ideas motivate revolutions and not class struggle. Once formulated,

ideas have a life of their own.

The starting point of Marx's materialism, he felt, was all right. "The positive elements of Marxism, freed from the fallacies and clarified in the light of greater scientific knowledge, are consistent with a more comprehensive philosophy which can be called integral radical humanism, a philosophy which combines mechanistic cosmology, materialistic metaphysics, secular rationalist

excesses of revolution. Of course, romanticism and revolution are perfectly logical processes, but not their excesses. We have to determine whether an idea is good for humanity by its reasonableness. Ideas are expressions of man's rationality, and denote his capacity for living in harmony with others. Since man generates ideas to shape his own destiny, he does not become an instrument in the hands of fate or a

M.N. Roy is one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century. In this book, he focuses on the fact that man is essentially rational and projects his concept of radical humanism as a solution for mankind



ethics..." But, according to Roy, Marx did not see that once ideas are formed, they continue to undergo an evolutionary process of their own—a process that runs parallel to the physical process of social evolution. He thinks this parallel process constitutes history. "History is the record of man's struggle for freedom. Social evolution is a constitution of biological evolution taking place on a higher level, where the struggle for existence, to be more effective, becomes cooperative and collective. That is why history is an organic evolutionary process."

Roy believes the Russian revolution proved that ideas precede social revolutions. He thinks that when man tries to give practical shape to his ideas, he becomes a romantic. Reason to romanticism to revolution is a continuous process, according to Roy.

Excess of romanticism leads to the

helpless victim of class struggle. Man asserts his freedom by his rationality.

The author raises a fundamental question: "What is the ultimate object of human activity?" and answers it: "The ultimate object is freedom of the individual, freedom from exploitation, political, social, religious or otherwise." Roy declares that man is constantly in the "quest for freedom and search for truth".

Roy's philosophy, radical humanism, is a way of life. I congratulate the publishers for publishing a new edition of this book as Roy's thoughts have become more relevant now as the human race is faced with conflicts, ignorance, inequalities and lack of necessities. His thoughts are more relevant to India, whose credibility, integrity, unity and sovereignty are under threat.

S.R. Bommal

The author, the former chief minister of Karnataka, is a keen student of M.N. Roy's work.

The black sheep

A major controversy erupts in Britain as 16 English rebel cricketers sign contracts to play a series of matches in South Africa

You could call them the 'Rand(y) Rebels'. They are the latest in the line of mercenaries for whom cricket and other games have ceased to be anything more than monetary propositions—in other words where the Krugerrand (the South African currency) matters more than anything else.

A group of 16 top-ranking cricketers of England have recently signed contracts to play a series of matches in South Africa in 1990 and 1991. For this they have been assured a tax-free payment of sums ranging from £80,000 — £200,000. The only hitch here is that all signatories to the Gleneagles Agreement have resolved to prevent any sporting links with South Africa as long as it pursues its policy of apartheid.

When the news of this proposed tour beginning in January next year broke out it succeeded in hammering the second nail into the coffin of British sport. The first came when the British Rugby Union announced that it had cleared a tour of its players to the same country. With players from two disciplines flouting international norms, a large section of international sports organisations have begun voicing the threat of excommunicating Britain from the world of sport.

Whether or not this proves to be an empty threat, it is a fact that in the immediate future, Britain will lose much more than face. Already, several member-nations of the Commonwealth Games Federation have announced that they were seriously considering a general boycott of the next Games, scheduled to be held in New Zealand early next year. Coincidentally, the date of departure of the rebel English tour—24 January—is the day the Commonwealth Games are scheduled to start.

This rebel tour, of course, is nothing new. There have been cricketers from several countries who have gone to South Africa either as a team or as individuals with what they call coaching assignments. In 1982, a team of English cricketers toured South Africa, followed by a squad from Australia, led by Kim Hughes in 1985-86 and the following

season. Several leading cricketers were involved in these rand-raising jaunts. The International Cricket Conference (ICC), the controlling body for cricket, prescribed a three-year ban on all players going to South Africa to play or teach the game.

As things stand, a great many cricketers, especially in England and Australia, are not averse to making trips like this for money. While the younger lot may think twice before knowingly jeopardising their official cricket careers, the older players who have done duty for the country for some time are influenced more by the financial security these trips promise than any talk of solidarity with the Third World or apartheid.

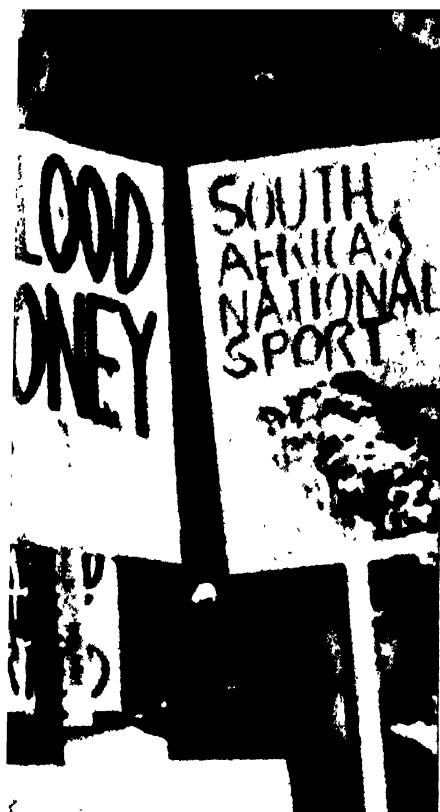
Mike Gatting, who has served England for many years, of course, has come up with an excuse for the current tour. "I'm prepared to go anywhere for the game. I don't believe in politics being mixed with sport—and I don't understand it either. I believe our trip will benefit the game." This last remark has been flayed by several cricketing greats. Pakistani captain Imran Khan has said that all this was hogwash and none of the rebels going on the tour had anything other than money on their minds.

Britain will lose much more than face. Already, several member-nations of the Commonwealth Games Federation have announced that they were seriously considering a boycott of the next Games, scheduled to be held in New Zealand next year



One curious fact is that there are two coloured cricketers signed for this tour. How players like Philip De Freitas wanted to join the rand bandwagon is anybody's guess. If anything, coloured players are likely to face far more opposition than whites, because the bulk of the direct opposition to the present South African regime comes from Third World countries. They face much more than the newly-prescribed five-year ban on playing for their country. They could well face social ostracism.

The only argument that the rebel cricketers can offer is the meagre payment the Test and County Cricket Board offers its players selected for Test and other matches. But the players



The effect of this tour is likely to be felt in India. First, the Nehru centenary cricket tournament will be affected. If the boycott gains in strength, we will have to withdraw from the Auckland Games as well

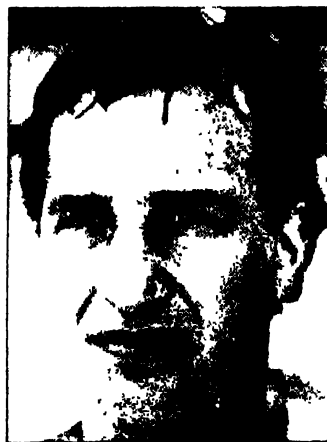
nouncing the tour and requesting the players to desist from making this move.

However, another faint strain, which is just surfacing, could well provide an effective deterrent to players going to South Africa. It is a demand for banning all such cricketers from any competitive cricket anywhere in the world, along with penalties for taking such a step. These penalties, they feel, should be

tive time. In 1986, Edinburgh was given the go-by when 32 countries boycotted it, protesting against its links with South Africa. Earlier, the Montreal Olympics were also shorn of their glamour because several countries had taken exception to New Zealand's participation. At that time, too, it was a rugby tour that New Zealand had allowed which these countries had objected to. They had demanded the banning of New Zealand from the Olympics. Ironically, this time round New Zealand will suffer if there is a boycott, though the fault is not theirs.

Repercussions will also be felt in other spheres of sport. England will have to find a means to counter the effects of this tour if it is to maintain sporting links with most other countries. Since legal sanctions are not possible at the moment, a change in laws or other methods will have to be found.

The effect of this tour is also likely to be felt in India. First, the Nehru centenary cricket tournament will be affected. Already crippled by the refusal of the



Mike Gatting leads the pack of rebels which includes Embury (centre) and Foster (right)

Public outcry over the issue was unrelenting as this protest outside Lord's shows

don't realise that flouting international norms amounts to unethical income.

However, what happens to the cricketers' careers is not of interest to the sporting world. The repercussions of this tour could be so severe that they could engulf the entire world of British sport. Representatives of several countries have already started demanding action to stop this tour. They have asked the Thatcher government to denounce the tour and make personal appeals to the players not to undertake the trip. They have also asked for a categorical stand from the TCCB, de-

financial. And so heavy that no player would risk going to South Africa unless he had decided not to get back to his homeland.

But neither the TCCB nor the Australian or other cricketing authorities are prepared to take such a drastic step at the moment. And this is the principal reason why this rebel tour could generate a movement for isolating Britain from the entire sporting world.

A campaign is already being planned to propagate the shunning of all sporting contacts with Britain for allowing their players to go to South Africa. Although this will be a long and difficult process, it could gradually gain the support of several countries.

As a start, the Commonwealth Games may be affected for the second consecu-

West Indies and Australia to take part in the competition on a limited-overs basis planned to be held in several parts of the country later this year, the automatic ban on players intending to go to South Africa will denude English cricket to such an extent that the country will be able to put in little more than a token appearance. That, too, if there is no move on the international circuit to sever links with England's sportspersons.

The second blow could be in the sphere of the Commonwealth Games. Last time around, India fell in with dissenting countries and refused to send a team to Edinburgh. If the boycott gains in strength, we will have to withdraw from the Auckland Games as well.

Arijit Sen

In service of man

Lakshmi Chand Jain wins the Magsaysay award for community development

It is a distinction he is uncomfortable with. When Lakshmi Chand Jain, 64, heard that he had won the Magsaysay award for public service this year, he wasn't elated. "I can't help feeling that the award is meaningless when millions of handloom weavers are faced with poverty and unemployment."

For years, Jain has been battling what he terms the "grim" implications of unemployment as a result of the textile policy. "When my friend Abid Hussain, who is the chairman of the Textile Policy Review Committee, called to inform me of the award, I reminded him that every single suggestion I had made to the Planning Commission so far had been rejected. My work has always been with the weavers and artisans, and what is the use of being elected for an award by a body sitting far away when I can do nothing to change their plight?" he says ruefully.

The development economist becomes the 27th Indian to win the Ramon Magsaysay award, Asia's highest recognition of outstanding work in the fields of public service, government leadership, journalism, literature, creative communications, arts, community leadership and international understanding. However modest Jain chooses to be about it, the award brings with it international recognition for over 45 years of public service. Sitting in his little office on New Delhi's Barakhamba Road, the slight man with bright eyes and a benevolent face points to the towering Food Corporation of India building outside his window, and exclaims, "Gandhiji would have fainted if he saw this. He advocated self-sufficiency in the basic necessities of life—food and clothing—not dependence upon vast structures of government." The history of the handloom weavers is inextricably linked with that of the freedom movement, says Jain, gesturing at his immaculate white *khadi kurta* attire. Cloth and food must be produced locally, he says, "not food in Haryana and Punjab and cloth by Reliance. You have to extract employment out of the production system, and the textile industry is suited for this. You can produce cloth in the hills or in the Rajasthan desert."

Jain's economic training was not acquired in classrooms, but founded on the Gandhian belief that poverty and inequality had to be eradicated. Till his marriage



Lakshmi Chand Jain: recognition for 45 years of service

(at 41, to economist Devaki Jain), he spent his time doing voluntary work, focusing on the basic problem of unemployment. His first brush with economics came when Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya visited his refugee rehabilitation effort at Delhi's Kingsway Camp soon after the Partition. All other visitors had raved about the facilities being offered, but far-sighted Kamaladevi shot a question at him which, he says, changed his life: what would the refugees do once the camp ended? "They were landless agricultural refugees, and we fought to get them agricultural land at Chhatapur (where there are fancy farms today)." Thus was the Indian Cooperative Union founded; later this premier institution was responsible for starting the Cottage Industries Limited to encourage handicrafts.

In 1966, faced with the prospect of

Jain becomes the 27th Indian to win Asia's most prestigious award. He has contributed vastly to India's planning process, even if his suggestions on the textile policy have gone largely unheeded

having to support a family, Jain took up a job for the first time. A group of technicians and engineers approached him for his expertise on economics to a project they had started together: Industrial Development Services, an economic engineering consultancy organisation which Jain heads today. Community development remains his main interest, but he is disillusioned with the fact that the country has forgotten what Gandhiji advocated. "Today's political system bears no resemblance to what we had, thought we were building," he says regretfully. "The village republic was essential for a society that was dignified and autonomous. Now we have produced a society highly dependent on the state." He denounces the Panchayati Raj Bill and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana scheme, calling them cosmetic efforts. "Here they are indulging in subterfuge, bypassing the states and giving the money direct to the *panchayats*," Jain says. "You don't have to be a political pundit to know that this is because state after state is going to the Opposition."

Jain's seminal work, *Grass Without Roots—Rural Development Under Government Auspices*, deals with his experience with community and rural development work since the First Plan in 1952. As chairman of the All-India Handicrafts Board (1978-1980), the founder chairman of the cooperative stores, Super Bazaar, and later as an expert on various economic, planning committees and steering groups, Jain has contributed vastly to India's planning process, even if his suggestions on the textile policy have gone largely unheeded. "From self-reliance, we have turned to Reliance," he laments, hitting out at the textile industry giant. "Planners have compulsions of their own, the government is in the clutches of the mill magnate lobby, which accounts for the entire manipulation of the textile policy."

The Gandhian says there are hundreds of worthwhile causes to contribute to. His 84-year-old father, who lives with him in New Delhi, is compiling an exhaustive history of freedom-fighters, and the journalist's award in his mother's memory needs upgrading. "When I see my father and his research, I realise I am nothing," he concludes humbly.

Shiraz Siddhvi / New Delhi

Bidding for a post

It was a novel method of electing the head of the village. The Morve gram panchayat in Maharashtra's Satara district held elections for the post of sarpanch and a deputy sarpanch on 1 August—with a difference.

Open tenders were floated for the posts. The one who bid the highest was Sadashiv



Jagtap, who paid Rs 13,500 and was declared the sarpanch. The second highest bidder was Shivaji Diagude who paid Rs 5,500 and was declared deputy sarpanch.

Proceeds from the auction will be used for the uplift of the hamlet.

The superior food

If you want to maintain a robust health and stay away from disease, try vegetarian food. At least, it's safe. And superior to non-vegetarian food.

In a recent speech, former vice-president B.D.Jatti remarked that dependence on "food of botanical origin" brought about a lot of savings. He said that recent scientific studies had shown that vegetarian food was superior to non-vegetarian diet. The studies were done by independent agencies in Britain. Meat-eaters fell victim to serious diseases and spent more time in hospitals than plant-eaters.

Talented duo

It is a rare combination indeed—two brothers who are endowed with exceptional academic abilities—and how! At 11, Balamurali Krishna will be stepping into his final year B.Sc, while his 18-year-old brother Jaya is at the moment doing a combined MD-Ph.D programme. Both the brothers are studying in the United States.

Take a look at Bala's abilities. When he was six he was admitted to school and completed his first grade in two months. In his third year in school he completed his third and fourth grades, and later, he moved on from the fifth to the seventh grade.

His skills, did not take long to draw the attention of the authorities. He was admitted to the Gifted Mathematics



Programme by the State University of New York and was engaged in the Study for Mathematically Precocious Youth, a programme at Johns Hopkins University. He qualified for this programme when he was just nine.

Incidentally, both the brothers have even authored a book, *AIDS—The True Story*, which was published in January this year. What's more, they are chalking out a mathematics programme for high school students in India coordinating their efforts with the Voorhees College, Vellore, to begin with.

The ultimate trickster

It was straight out of a film. In Bombay, Laxmanbhai Parekh Zaveri used at least four different names and swindled diamond merchants to the tune of Rs 30 lakhs.

The poseur donned the cloak of a diamond importer-exporter and used four bogus names—Ramanlal, Benlul, Babulal and Porwal. In order to give some credence to his so-called affluence—and repute—he boasted of owning a flat in Santa Cruz (while actually renting a paying guest accommodation), and became a member of the Bom-

bay Diamond Merchants Association. By gaining an introduction through a well-known commission agent, he won the confidence of the traders in the diamond industry.



He printed visiting cards and sported different wigs, spectacles and hair styles to suit his image—and convenience. He collected the diamonds between February and March from his victims on the plea that he wanted to show them to foreign customers.

And absconded. But not for long. He was finally arrested by the police on 1 August.

A garden of skulls

When you feel down in the dumps and are suffering from mental strain, try taking a walk through the garden of skulls. Morbid? Always sculptor P.V. Ramachandran Pillai does not think so.

'Highway Ramachandran'—as he is popularly known—is working on a unique project: a garden of 100,000 human skulls—in terracotta. He has already created prototypes of nearly 500 skulls, which he calls "frustrated skulls", since they reflect the emotions of a "tortured soul". The garden is meant to provide relief to morose people, those who suffer from great tension. A walk through the garden could soothe one's taxed mind, says Ramachandran.

THIS INDIA

● **BILASPUR:** In the first-ever prosecution and conviction of its kind in the state, the chief judicial magistrate, M.D. Sharma, here recently sentenced a *pujari* of Nainadevi temple to six months' rigorous imprisonment and fined him Rs 1000 under Section 195 of the IPC. The judge found the priest, Desh Raj, guilty of performing the *puja* while drunk. This resulted in an altercation between him and some pilgrims who were present in the temple. The pilgrims reported the matter to the police that the *pujari* had hurt their religious sentiments by performing the *puja* under the influence of liquor—*The Tribune* (Sunil Sharma, Kathua)

● **AURANGABAD:** Students who appeared for the second year examination of the bachelor of homoeopathy (medical and surgery), conducted by the Marathwada university in March-April this year, secured more than 60 marks out of 50. More than 25 students had appeared for the practicals which were of 50 marks—*The Kashmir Times* (Rohit Tiku, Srinagar)

PRIZE RS 100 FOR THE ENTRY GIVEN FIRST

BEGINNING 13 AUGUST 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March —20 April)

You may have to seek alternate means of subsistence this week. This will be because you may be disappointed with your current assignment. You may not find yourself in a position to depend on friends. Relatives will not be helpful either. In any case, you should not rely too much on others. If you are to make any headway, you have to make it on your own steam. Look after your health.

Good dates: 13, 15 and 19

Lucky numbers: 6, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: North



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

Though most of your pressing problems will be solved, you will still find minor obstacles on your path to success this week. You might also face opposition on your professional front. An old person of the opposite sex will cause some problems. However, the time is particularly favourable for love and matrimonial affairs. You are advised not to waste time on questionable pleasures.

Good dates: 14, 16 and 17

Lucky numbers: 3, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: South



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

Your problems, despite your efforts, will not be solved this week. You are likely to remain perplexed and apprehensive. The domestic front will also prove disappointing. Any wrong move or decision on your part may prove expensive. You will have to constantly guard against deceit. You will not be in a position to trust or rely on too many people. But don't worry. There are better days ahead.

Good dates: 14, 15 and 18

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 7

Favourable direction: West



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

This promises to be a very successful week for you. Matters of the heart will, however, cause anxiety. Litigations should also be avoided. In moments of crisis, women will come to your rescue. You might make new friends. However, your relatives will not be very co-operative. You are advised not to mix business with pleasure.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 19

Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: South



LEO (21 July—20 August)

A female member of your family may cause anxiety to you. However, women-folk in general will be of great help to you. Those in authority will also prove helpful. You may gain financially, provided you are discreet. Much of course will depend on your own efforts and initiative. You are advised to look after your health. This is a favourable week for trekkers.

Good dates: 13, 17 and 18

Lucky numbers: 1, 3 and 5

Favourable direction: East



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

Your business will suffer a minor setback in the early part of this week. Otherwise your affairs will make steady progress. New friends and fresh interests will contribute to your happiness. Children will also be a source of joy and comfort. The time is favourable for courtship and marriage. Your health will improve. You are advised to keep up your correspondence.

Good dates: 17, 18 and 19

Lucky numbers: 3, 7 and 9

Favourable direction: South-east



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

This week will provide you with plenty of opportunities for fun and frolic. You may, however, lose something which has been very precious to you. The time is particularly good for gambling, speculation and love affairs. You will find yourself in a position to repay your debts. Professional affairs will make good progress, despite opposition from seniors or those in authority.

Good dates: 15, 16 and 17

Lucky numbers: 4, 8 and 9

Favourable direction: North-west



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

This will be a happier and certainly more eventful week for you. The time will be particularly favourable for love and matrimonial affairs. Social engagements will keep you busy. Speculative ventures will yield good results. An elderly relative will prove very helpful. However, be careful in money matters. Check extravagance.

Good dates: 16, 18 and 19

Lucky numbers: 2, 3 and 8

Favourable direction: South



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

Relatives will help you in various ways this week. Domestic affairs will keep you quite busy and, as a result, you may not find time to pay attention to your professional affairs. Love and matrimonial affairs will make steady progress. The death of a distant friend or relative will cause grief. Financially, you will be in a spot of trouble. Look after your health.

Good dates: 13, 16 and 18

Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9

Favourable direction: East



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

Promotions or transfers are in store for you this week. You may have to undertake a journey which will be the answer to one of your pressing domestic problems. This is a very critical week for businessmen. Someone may fall ill, but do not be too worried about it. The time is particularly favourable for those who belong to the working classes. Avoid entering into disputes.

Good dates: 16, 17 and 18

Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 9

Favourable direction: North-west



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

Provided you are discreet and careful on the professional front, this week has a fair measure of success in store for you. Keep your business partners and other associates in good humour. However, love and domestic affairs are not well-signified. Someone close to you will cause anxiety. You are advised not to make changes in your plans and to avoid getting into disputes.

Good dates: 14, 18 and 19

Lucky numbers: 2, 6 and 7

Favourable direction: North



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

Your domestic affairs will be a source of inspiration and happiness. You will receive letters which will bring good news concerning your career prospects or business. On the whole, this should prove to be a successful week. You might be promoted. Be discreet in what you say. Conserve your energies and resources for the future.

Good dates: 14, 15 and 19

Lucky numbers: 5, 6 and 7

Favourable direction: West

Star Partners: Virgo—Leo

The Virgo woman may be carried away by the Leo man's personality and confidence. The Leo man loves to be the focus of attention. He likes people flattering and admiring him. But he may also be arrogant and imperious and the sooner the Virgo woman realises this, the better for her.

Born again

The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) has found its voice again. The party organ, *Namadhu MGR* (Our MGR), was revived with a great deal of fanfare and publicity (full-page advertisements in the Madras press) early this month. The daily was closed down by party general secretary Jayalalitha on 6 June, probably because of financial constraints.

For long, the AIADMK had suffered from a serious resource crunch, forcing Jayalalitha to take some unusual steps (such as demanding deposits from members



Jayalalitha: reviving the paper

who wanted to contest the Tamil Nadu state election) to raise money. It is believed that it was the recent induction of former minister R.M. Veerappan into the AIADMK fold that allowed *Namadhu MGR* to hit the stands once again. A wealthy film producer, Veerappan is close to a number of the state's money bags. People believe that Jayalalitha took him on only to make her party financially viable.

No easy job

The *Namadhu MGR* re-launch had its moment of controversy. A reporter who worked with the paper before it closed down, V. Kannan, was delighted when he



Natarajan: bullying a journalist ?

saw the ads that announced its 'comeback'. He arranged to see M. Natarajan—Jayalalitha's aide who is believed to have the lady in his control—about being re-hired by the paper. According to Kannan, their meeting on 27 July was an unusual one. Natarajan, he alleges, accused him of feeding other newsmen with stories that showed Jayalalitha in a bad light and then proceeded to beat him up. Natarajan has denied that any such thing took place, but the matter is to be decided by the chief metropolitan magistrate, before whom Kannan lodged his complaint.

War of words

It is the silly season in Andhra Pradesh. Politicians have been trading the most absurd charges ever since Rajiv Gandhi took a dig at chief minister N.T. Rama Rao. "How can they (the Opposition) allow themselves to be led on the political stage to participate in a drama by someone whose only claim to fame was celluloid?" he asked in a reference to the Opposition's resignation from the Lok Sabha. Two days later, NTR retaliated by accusing Rajiv's government of having accepted bribes in the Bofors deal and



NTR (left) and Rajiv Gandhi: trading charges

calling him "a traitor". This proved too much for former APCC(I) chief Jalagam Vengala Rao, who repeatedly charged NTR with being a "CIA agent". He claimed he had proof of this. Congressman and former associate of NTR, Nadlenda Bhaskara couldn't resist pointing out that it was he who first "publicly announced that NTR was a CIA agent".

NTR's men jumped to his defence. Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party leader P. Upendra said that there was nothing wrong in calling someone who had acted against the national interest a traitor. And TDP general secretary Ashok Gajapathi Raju—in a piece of reasoning that is not altogether clear—said that if NTR was a CIA agent, then by the same token Rajiv was an agent for the French. The war of words—when it was last heard—was very much on.

Tripped up

One example of how the All India Congress Committee (AICC-I) 'works'. Recently, it decided to send one of its joint secretaries, Kailash Pati, to Singbhum district in Bihar to "go into the bifurcation of the District Congress Committee



(DCC)" there. But when reporters cross-checked with the state's Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC-I) chief, Jagannath Mishra, he told them that the DCC was not bifurcated and that all he had done was to set up



Mishra: unnecessary investigation

town-level committees in the district. Why then did the AICC(I) send someone to enquire into something that did not happen? The theory that Pati's was another of those meaningless pleasure trips that Congress functionaries make in the guise of work is weak. Singbhum district, after all, is nobody's idea of paradise. The truth lies, perhaps, in a characteristic that the AICC(I) has exhibited more than once: ignorance. ■



Mani Shankar Aiyar: unlikely guest



G. Parthasarathy: left out

Mani matters

The line between politics and the civil service has never been finer. Recently, the flamboyant joint secretary of the Prime Minister's office (PMO), Mani Shankar Aiyar, was among those who attended the meeting of the Congress(I) Working Committee at Rajiv's residence. The presence of Aiyar, who was responsible for drafting the Panchayati Raj Bill, caused a great deal of surprise and led some senior politicians to frown. This was the first time, after all, that a bureaucrat was invited to attend a high-powered party meeting. There was another official present at the PM's residence that day—the civil service's new power-centre, G. Parthasarathy. However, all he did was stalk the corridor outside the room in which the meeting was held, waiting to be called in if the need arose.

Sharma is safe

When elections are round the corner, the sword over the occupant of

Mandi House's throne invariably hangs by a slimmer thread. And Doordarshan's director-general Shiv Sharma has for long feared that it was in danger of snapping. However, he heaved a sigh of relief sometime back, when the government confirmed his tenure.

From all accounts, the government is very pleased with Sharma. The H.K.L. Bhagat protégé is now adept at the art of making programmes that show it up in the kindest light. Credibility be damned. Information and broadcasting ministry officials predict that Sharma is safe at least until the elections.

Shiv Sharma: staying power



Of rice and men

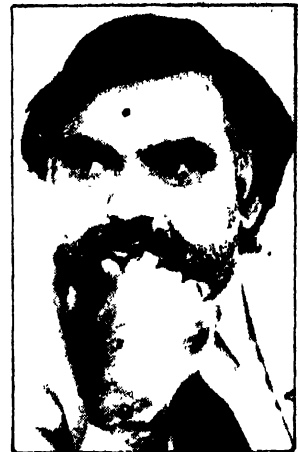
The capital's most famous wheeler-dealer has been at it again. Despite the furore in the press about his rice deals, builder-cum-hotelier Lalit Suri recently signed another contract to export *basmati* to the Soviet Union—this time for one lakh tonnes. The price at which the deal was struck has amazed market circles. While the retail price for *basmati* is Rs 19,000 a tonne, Suri is selling for as little as Rs 12,000. How does he do it? Will the quality of the

H.K.L. Bhagat: pleased



exported rice be up to the mark? And why does the government continue to allow such large exports of rice when 3.5 lakh tonnes of it are being imported to India?

Lalit Suri: at it again



Youth power

Not half as many young Congressmen are likely to get tickets to stand for election to the Lok Sabha as did in 1984. But this has not prevented the Youth Congress from gearing up for the poll, even before its date has been announced. At the moment, it is organising rallies all over the country to tell the people how cowardly and hypocritical the Opposition was to first raise the Bofors issue and then resign from Parliament and refuse to discuss it.

The Youth Congress has also set up booth-level committees in different states to scan the electoral rolls for false names or omissions. Already, they are complaining that in the non-Congress(I)-ruled states, the rolls have been swamped with new names. They are not sure why. Maybe, it's because the voting age has been lowered. But the members of booth-level committees do not think this is the only explanation. ■

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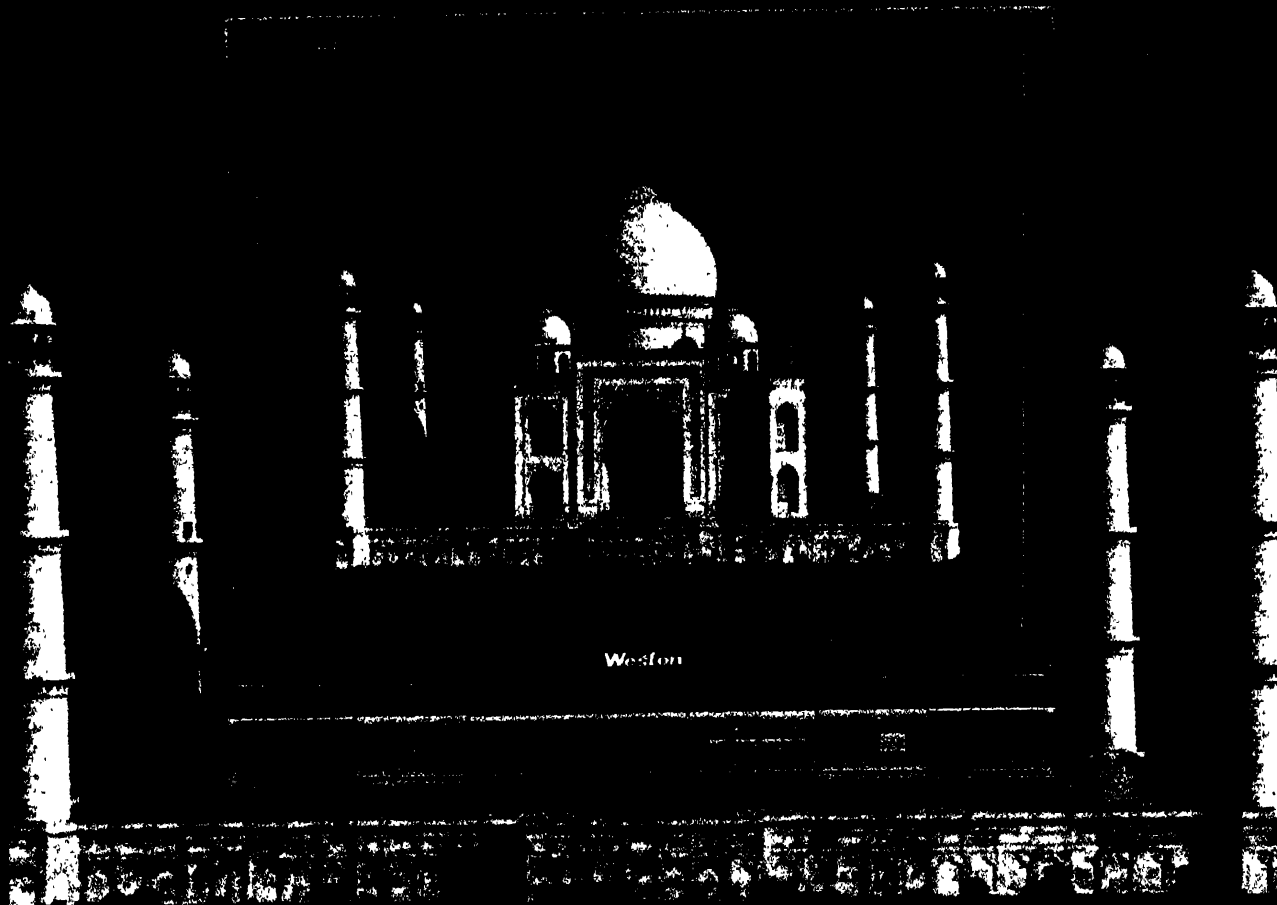


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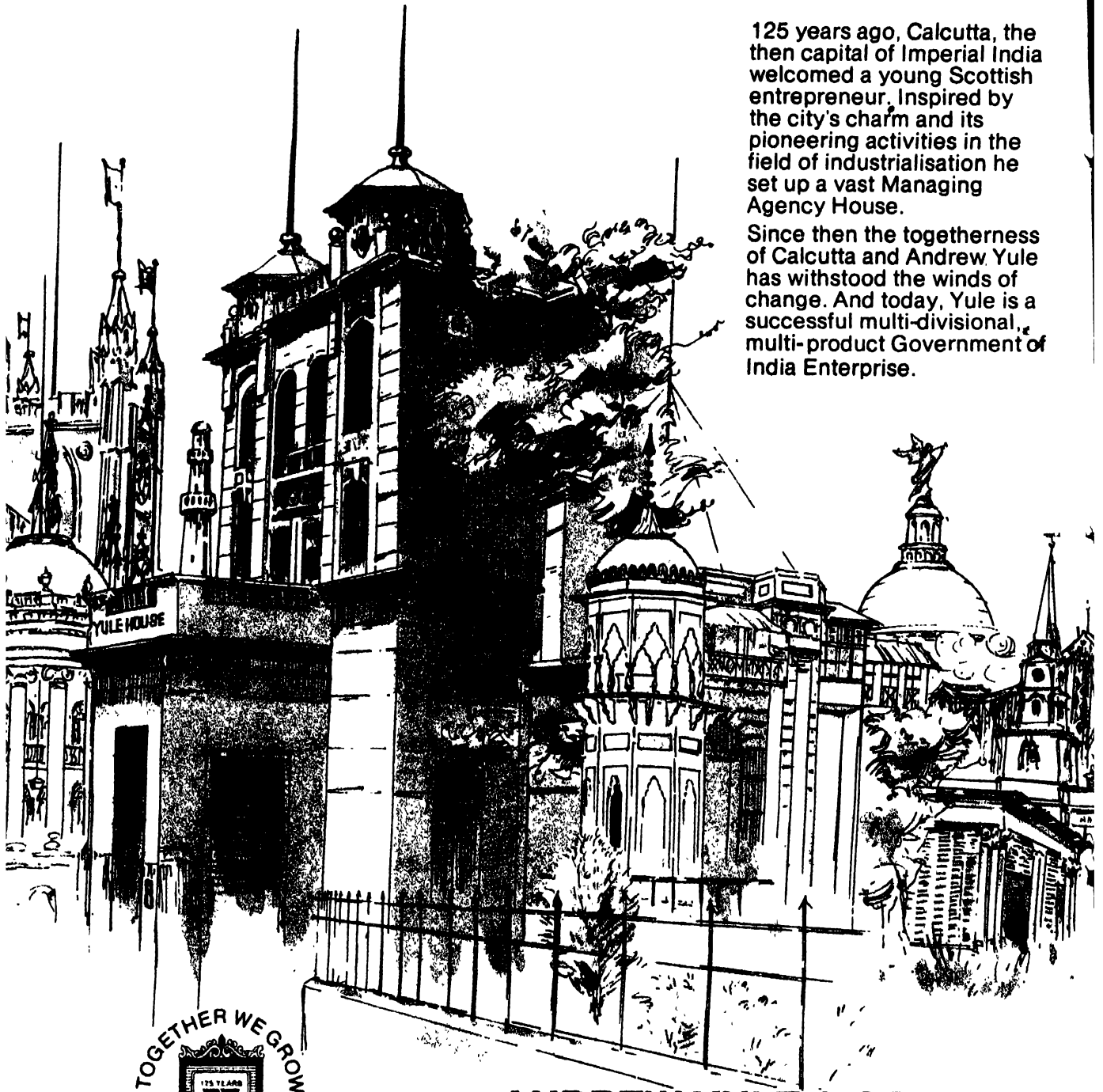
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OYE, OYE!

Tridev fever sweeps the nation as the film becomes the biggest hit since *Sholay*.

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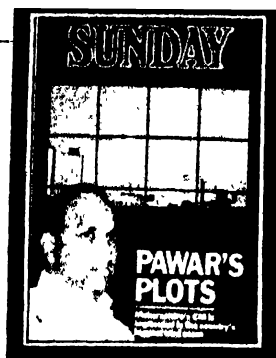
In this excerpt, reproduced from *Rolling Stones*, a western journalist presents a tongue-in-cheek account of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and provides interesting vignettes of a war-torn nation.

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Land scam

It is hardly surprising to find corruption seeping into politics (*Pawar's plots*, 2—8 July). Despite the fact that Pawar is involved in one of the biggest land scandals in recent times, he is completely unfazed. This in itself is a grim pointer to the state of politics today. Strangely, even Rajiv Gandhi is not calling for action against the Maharashtra CM. The reason perhaps lies in his not wanting to upset the chess-board of the state's politics. After the demise of Vasantdada Patil, the PM has no one to fall back upon in Maharashtra. Despite his unscrupulous and cunning ways, Pawar, no doubt, has the power and guile to lead the Congress(I) to victory in Maharashtra at the next elections.

Anil Kumar Dwivedi, New Delhi

Sharad Pawar: dubious deals?



Misconception

I was particularly amused to find a statement about Vajpayee: "You remember the early Vajpayee... who told us that secularism did not mean giving over the rights of the majority to a bunch of minorities" (*Why Vajpayee failed*, 16—22 July). I would like to know what is right in the author's belief and whether secularism means giving away the rights of the majority to



A.B. Vajpayee: a liberal minorities. I was even more amused to read the author's next statement: "Everybody who was brought up as a secularist was outraged." Yes indeed! After all, a "true secularist" is a Hindu-baiter and a bootlicker of the minorities. I would like to inform the author that the common man has now developed a contempt for phoney secularists like him who will retract their steps when it comes to attacking minority communalism and fanaticism, but will look for an excuse to criticise Hindus and their organisations.

Deepak Deshpande, Nagpur (Maharashtra)

Two pilots

Why is an unnecessary fuss being made about the fact that Satish Sharma is the second most powerful man in the country (*The other pilot*, 25 June—1 July)? If one pilot can rule the coun-

try, why can't another be his adviser? In India, the more corrupt a leader is, the greater is his leadership quality. The redeeming feature in the Rajiv-Satish friendship is that it has stood the test of time. But then, friendship and governance should not be mixed at least for the sake of the nation.

Rajoo Goyal, Jorhat (Assam)

This India

Rajasthan is no longer a land of Rajput chivalry (*A marriage on earth*, 30 July—5 August). It is indeed ironical that at a time when India is entering the missile age, petty differences between castes still exist. The incident in which a Harijan bride and groom were married with a police baton instead of the sacred fire is too bizarre. This is a blatant violation of the Constitution. If the Harijans are not recognised as essential segments of the Hindu community, how will they ever get their identity? It is amazing how people like Syed Shahabuddin get away with making comments about the "minorities and weaker sections" and yet do nothing about such untoward incidents.

A.B. Roy, Hooghly (West Bengal)

Class barrier

While it is true to say that people react violently to conversion, it is not fair to say that Muslims react more violently to conversion (*Changing faiths*, 30 July—5 August). Actually it is not religion which is creating problems, but the class barrier which is at the root of all evil. As long as the division between 'upper' and 'lower' classes exists, there is no hope for society. Khushwant Singh cites the instance of a Muslim father's reaction when his daughter converted to Christianity. Agreed, the daughter met

with a gruesome death, but has Mr Singh forgotten the instances of those women who were done away with because they failed to bring dowry?

Asim Fehmi, Delhi

Sexist

The title of the story was hardly fair (*Beauty and the brain*, 30 July—5 August). It had a sexist bias. Do you really believe that intelligence is the prerogative of men only? After Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Margaret Thatcher and Corazon Aquino, I thought we had proved our worth. But obviously male chauvinists do not think so.

Aleya Das, New Delhi



Jayalalitha: unfair dig

R.M. Veerappan is hardly being honest when he says that he has never quarrelled with Jayalalitha. In fact, he was responsible for all the chaos after MGR's death. He had even passed round the word that Jayalalitha was only interested in money and power. Now when he has realised that he cannot survive on his own merit, he has come back to Jayalalitha. You have rightly predicted that bad days are ahead for the DMK. I wonder how long the honeymoon between Veerappan and Jayalalitha will continue.

Politicians have neither principles nor scruples as politics in Tamil Nadu will amply testify.

U.S. Iyer, Bangalore (Karnataka)

IAF's problems

On what basis does Air Commodore Jasjit Singh say that the accident rate of IAF fighter aircraft is not higher than in any other country (*The unsafe skies*, 16—22 July)? The accident rate of 1.5 per cent for every 10,000 flying hours is certainly on the higher side when compared to the 0.65 per cent in the US Air Force. It is because of this high accident rate that very few people are joining the air force. Added to this is the



Formation flying by IAF pilots

fact that the IAF pilots are not given the kind of incentives that pilots in Indian as well as foreign airlines enjoy.

If the IAF feels that HAL is not fully equipped to indigenise the MiG-21, MiG-23 or MiG-27, then it should import these aircraft from the Soviet Union, or ask HAL to improve its standards.

Sanjay Chopra, Chandigarh

Need of the hour

The Indo-Sri Lankan accord was signed at a

A solar system on your roof

You have mentioned that certain houses are built with a lotus pond on the roof-top and that cost is of no consideration (*Have money will spend*, 23—29 July). But there is an interesting reason for having a roof-top pond: its use as a passive solar system to control room temperature. The main inhibiting factor is, of course, the high initial cost. The system consists of a shallow pond on the roof with a cover which is kept on during the day and removed at nights in summer. The pond absorbs heat from the environment and dissipates it into the atmosphere at night, thus

maintaining an even temperatures inside. This explanation is naturally an oversimplification of the actual procedure, because much more is involved in the design than the mere setting up of the pond. Such techniques should be an obvious choice for a designer commissioned to produce an innovation, especially if there is no constraint on the budget. I am sure that if certain solar-sensitive techniques are studied and applied, a style may well evolve which is not just energy efficient, but will also have an intellectual appeal.

F.M. Soonawalla, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)

time when Rajiv Gandhi was confronted with the Bofors controversy (*An area of discord*, 9—15 July). He, however, insisted that the accord was mainly reached to avoid the US setting up an air base at Trincomalee, which would have affected the unity and integrity of India. Likewise, President Premadasa is grappling with a poor administration and lack of will power on the part of his party to translate the election manifesto into a reality. Rajiv Gandhi, too, has to answer the voters on the IPKF's presence in Sri Lanka. In order to resolve the imbroglio, both Rajiv and

Premadasa will have to exhibit a statesmanship of the highest order.

Mil. Ronald, New Delhi

■ India is fast emerging as a bully. The demonstration of its might in Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives is not aimed at winning votes in an election year, and neither is it a result of errors of judgment on the part of Rajiv Gandhi's government. It seems to be an exercise to emerge as the Big Brother of the region. The object is morally wrong and, more important, unattainable.

Rohit Jain, Serampore (West Bengal)

BJP to the rescue

Looking back, one realises that no party has been more consistent than the BJP (*Tale of two parties*, 25 June—1 July). The BJP has the most credibility among all the Opposition parties put together. Since the aim of the Opposition is to oust the Congress(I), why is such a ruckus being made over the BJP's decision to form an alliance with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra? First, the Shiv Sena is at the most a regional



Vajpayee (left) and Advani: credible

party like the Telugu Desam or the DMK. Second, the Janata Dal and the Janata Party should realise that they cannot wrest a victory in Maharashtra singlehandedly. They would do well to support the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance, or else they will only help the Congress(I) to win. And if the BJP wins in Maharashtra, it will be heading the first non-Congress(I) government in the state.

Prabhakar S. Harsole, Indore (Madhya Pradesh)

Tala and talam

K. V. K. Sundaram states that *raga* and *tala* in Sanskrit become *ragam* and *talam* in Tamil (*Letters*, 16—22 July). *Raga*, of course, is a Sanskrit term, but *talam* is an original Tamil term which has become *tala* in Sanskrit. Though the term *ragam* is popularly used in Tamil Nadu, the Tamil term *pan* (rhyming with sun), which means *ragam*, is also found in Tamil literature.

T. Sengadir, Bombay (Maharashtra)

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The French connection



An impressionistic account of France and the ways of its people

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Much has been written on the 200th anniversary celebrations of the French Revolution and its influence on Western thinking. It had no immediate impact on Asia. For one what was happening in Paris came to be known in these parts many months later. What would our great, great grandsires have made of the storming of the Bastille or the guillotining of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and thousands of well-to-do citizens? Concepts like equality, liberty and fraternity must have sounded very odd to people steeped in monarchic and feudal traditions. The only Indian who seemed to have responded to the call from France was Tipu Sultan of Mysore who assumed the title *Citoyen Tipu*. This was more to ingratiate himself with his French allies in his wars against the English than acquiescing to notions of freedom or equality.

French presence in India was of too short a duration to leave any permanent impression on Indian thinking or way of living. Although hundreds of French soldiers of fortune rose to high positions in the armies of the Marathas and the Sikhs they did not stay with their employers long enough to be able to Frenchify them. They introduced French words of command in the army, French wines, brandy, champagne and perfumes to the courts of the Indian aristocracy but hardly any Indians outside their dwindling possessions learnt their language or read their literature in translation.

It was after the First World War that Indians began to discover France. And that largely because Indian students studying in British universities found the atmosphere in France comparatively freer of racial prejudice, living much cheaper, the food and wine more appetising and French women more attractive and forthcoming than they encountered in England. When I first went to Paris in the 1930s,

there were barely a handful of Indians living there and not a single Indian restaurant. A Sikh was still a strange sight. For some reason street urchins, when they spotted me, shouted "Ali Baba". Young ladies asked me to read the palms of their hands. Most thought that I wore a turban because I was a magician.

I PICKED up a certain amount of French from Berlitz and Summer courses on French literature organised by Sorbonne University. The French have this pig-headed snobbishness about their language. They refuse to learn any other and do not really open up with anyone who does not speak French. I found the going much easier after I was able to converse with them. I spent all my holidays in France: in winter, skiing in the French Alps; in summer, doing the tennis circuit in Brittany, sea-bathing and flirting on the Cote d'Azur at Nice or Cannes. It was always more rewarding than holidaying in England or other countries of Europe. France was less inhibited: you could see beautiful naked girls dance in Folies Bergere; you could go to night clubs catering for all kinds of sexual deviants; you could read books banned in England and America; you could kill yourself with drink or drugs. Nobody objected.

Things changed rapidly after the Second World War. France became more expensive to live in than England. And less tolerant towards coloured people because of the troubles they were having hanging on to their African colonies. The two years I spent with UNESCO in Paris proved financially disastrous for me. Despite the high, tax-free salary and diplomatic privileges I was out of pocket by several thousand dollars. The one thing I found more irritating than their unfriendliness was their obsession with money. The French are more money-minded than any other people I have met. And more demanding of *baksheesh* than Indian beggars. They are the originators

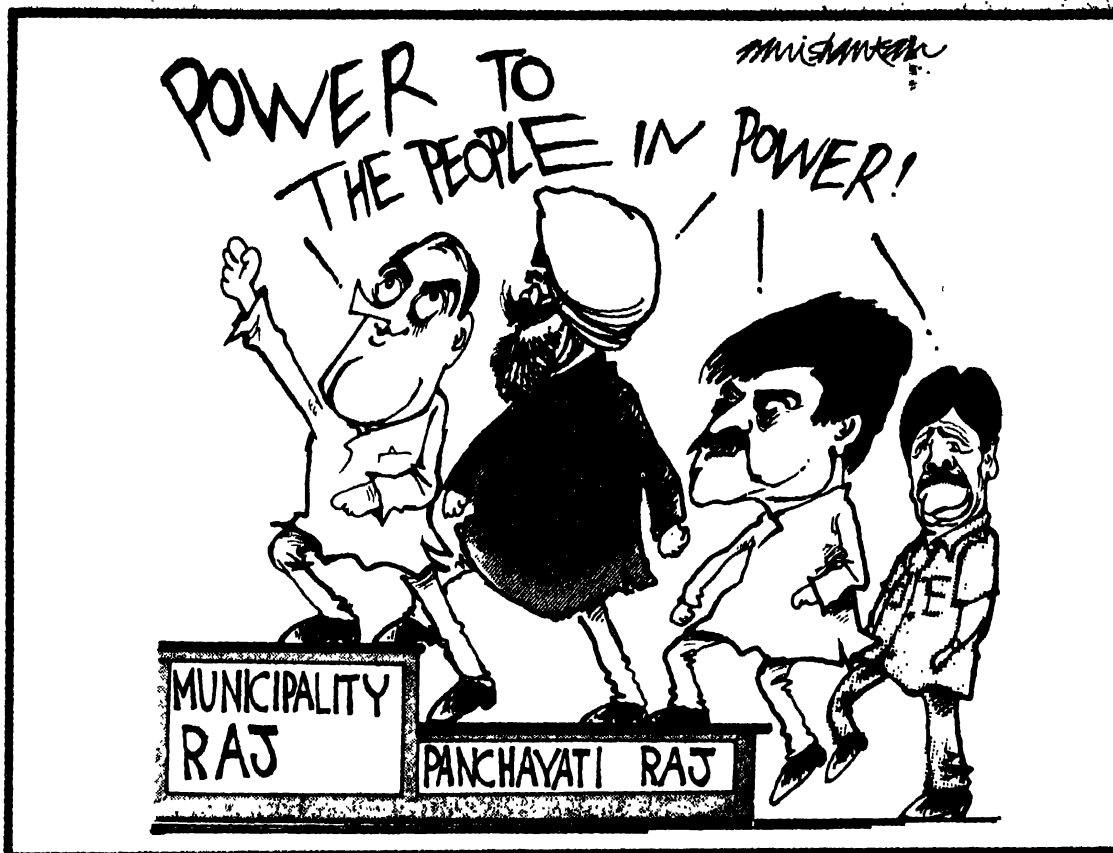
of "service charge" after you have paid for the service you got and have an ever-extended palm for *pour-boire* — tips. The usherette who flashes her torch in the cinema to show you your seat expects a tip, the boy who shows you the boat you have hired and paid for wants a tip; so do cab-drivers, waiters and chamber maids. A foreigner can go crazy working out how much to give for these non-services.

However, I discovered why Paris had become the favourite city for emigre writers, poets, painters and dancers. In no other country in the world is a creative artist given more respect than in France. I wrote two novels in France. One over weekends in a bistro named *Saint Jean au*

Bois deep in the forest of Compiègne; the other in a cottage I had rented in village Faviers near Houdan, about 60 kilometres south of Paris. In both places the villagers treated me with deference as *Monsieur Le Ecrivain*—the writer.

A CREATIVE artist is left alone to do his own thing; when he wants company of like-minded people he can go to his favourite restaurant in Montparnasse close to the Metro station, Rotonde. There he can drink endless cups of black coffee, sip absinthe, smoke Gauloise till his lungs burst. And talk and talk till he has run out of breath and ideas. ■

The French have this pig-headed snobbishness about their language. They refuse to learn any other and do not really open up with anyone who does not speak French



RAVI SHANKAR/THE TELEGRAPH

Let us see what happens in the other House (Rajya Sabha) where, in glaring contrast to their behaviour here, they cling like limpets to their seats.

RAJIV GANDHI, Prime Minister, referring to the mass resignation of the Opposition members in the Lok Sabha

Who is a limpet, the Prime Minister or the Opposition?

P. UPENDRA, Telugu Desam leader, in response to Rajiv Gandhi's remark in the Lok Sabha

Bharat bachane se pehale, Rajya Sabha ko bacha lijiye.

NAJMA HEPTULLAH, deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, to Opposition members

I am just a humble worker of the Congress and will remain so.

N.D. TIWARI, Uttar Pradesh chief minister

While the communists say power to the party, we say power to the people.

PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSHI, Union minister of state for commerce

The Congress(I) will again win all the 40 Lok Sabha seats from Madhya Pradesh as it had done in the last elections and the BJP and Janata Dal nominees will forfeit their security deposits.

MOTILAL VORA, Madhya Pradesh chief minister

If elections are near, can fund-raising be far behind?

M.V. KAMATH, former editor of The Illustrated Weekly of India

My role in supporting, opposing or forming a party will be a leading role. I will neither be Karunanidhi's Radhika nor Congress' Arun Govil.

SHATRUGHAN SINHA, actor

These so-called professionals have taken the BCCI for a ride at every stage. No individual or collection of mercenaries was ever greater than the game.

BISHEN SINGH BEDI, former captain of the Indian cricket team, on the one-year ban imposed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on the six top cricketers

I fail to understand how the cricketers could be banned at this stage when the prestige and honour of the country were at stake as India is scheduled to go to Sharjah, Pakistan and England besides hosting the prestigious Nehru Centenary Tournament.

LALA AMARNATH, former Indian cricket captain, deploring the ban

I do not find anything wrong in starring opposite a person who reportedly practises weird tantric rituals and sleeps in a sari.

MEENAKSHI SESHADRI, actress, on her role in NTR's Viswamitra

Parting problems

V.P. Singh urges Congressmen to revolt against Rajiv Gandhi. But will they?

Vishwanath Pratap Singh is playing Pied Piper. Like the sorcerer of Hamelin, he is hoping to lure Congressmen into the Opposition coven—not by brandishments but by tapping their inexhaustible reservoir of discontent. His message: the power and the glory lies with the Opposition and Congressmen who want a share of all that should get out while they can. And this message, piped with vigour and insistence, has set the ruling party's stiff upper lip twitching with annoyance.

The reaction in the Congress(I) camp has been predictable, loud and indignant. When V.P. Singh appealed to Congressmen to "listen to the voice of conscience and revolt against the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi", 16 young Congress(I) faithfuls—Anand Sharma, Ahmed Patel, Pawan Kumar Bansal and Bhubaneswar Kalita included—scribbled out a joint statement which said that V.P. Singh's call was yet another "frustrated outburst" of a man desperate to capture political power. Singh had said that the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report on Bofors had finally and conclusively proved that Rajiv Gandhi had been lying to Parliament and the country on the Bofors issue. The Janata Dal leader appealed to all Congressmen who had respect for democratic institutions to desert those who had "put the country's security at risk". The Congress(I) MPs, however, felt that "Singh's call was an insult to all true Congressmen who remain committed to uphold the great values of this organisation..." They said that V.P. Singh should be condemned by all those who stood for political conviction and morality.

In the same breath, the voluble Congress(I) minister of state for power, Kalpnath Rai, added: "His (Singh's) call to Congressmen is intended to create political chaos in the country as part of the totally negative attitude of the Opposition." Rai went on to argue that

V.P. Singh's call was "part of an international conspiracy against India and its leadership".

Yet, surprisingly, all the sound and fury was for nothing. V.P. Singh's call did not lead to any exodus from the Congress(I). Not a single Congressman had even issued a threatening murmur and, on the contrary, were falling over each other to pledge undying loyalty to the Congress leadership. Rao Birendra Singh, the former Congress(I) Union minister from Haryana, had resigned in the wake of the CAG report controversy but before V.P. Singh issued his call. In any case, Rao made it clear that he was not leaving the Congress(I) to join the Janata Dal. Similarly, Nanje Gowda, the Congress(I) MP from Karnataka, criticised the party leadership and was expelled prior to Singh's call to revolt. Rajasthan Congress(I) leader and former Union minister Naval Kishore Sharma, who, the political grapevine said, was on the verge of quitting, hastily issued a statement denying the rumours.

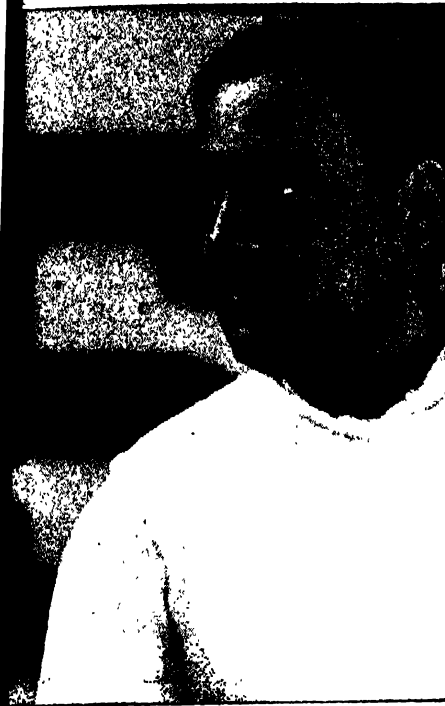
Tariq Anwar: loyal soldier of the Congress(I) ▶

V.P. Singh's call to Congressmen to revolt did not lead to any exodus. Not a single Congressman even issued a threatening murmur. On the contrary, they were falling over each other to pledge loyalty to the Congress(I) leadership



V.P. Singh and Rajiv Gandhi: a psychological war





no real ammunition, only imaginary fears to play upon. But fears there are aplenty. The possibility of Congressmen engineering an exodus or a revolt continues to haunt the party leadership. The threat is more real today than it was two years ago when V.P. Singh along with Arun Nehru and others had first urged Congressmen to desert Rajiv Gandhi. At that time, it was argued that the Anti-Defection Bill and the thought of giving up two years of parliamentary privileges were dampening the potential for rebellion. Today, with the term of the present Lok Sabha almost over and the prospects of a Congress(I) victory diminishing in the face of the Opposition's decision to field one common candidate in each parliamentary constituency, Congressmen could be less inclined to stay put.

A more cogent motive for revolt is revenge, feels Rajmangal Pande, the 69-year-old MP from Deoria, Uttar Pradesh, who quit the Congress(I) to join the Janata Dal in January this year. "Many Congressmen are groaning under

can forget humiliation or ignominy."

Discontent against Rajiv Gandhi's style of functioning is, however, nothing new. Last July, a group of nine Congress(I) MPs—including Abdul Ghafoor, Naval Kishore Sharma, Rajmangal Pande, Prabhavati Gupta, Chimanbhai Mehta, Vir Sen, Chokha Rao, Harpal Singh and Rao Birendra Singh—had penned a strong protest note to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The letter had deplored the lack of inner party democracy, criticised the fact that organisational elections had been put off and that state leaders were being whimsically and frequently changed, and demanded that the true facts of the Bofors case be disclosed to dispel all charges of corruption. Predictably, the letter had evoked no response. "Nobody even came to ask us why we had written such a letter," recalls Rao Birendra Singh. "Our contention was that greater democracy was required within the party. But here we found that we could not raise a voice as it would be interpreted as a sin against the party leadership." Rao Birendra Singh says he decided to quit the party when he felt that he had served his term and could not do anything more for the party. The attack on the institution of the CAG was the last straw for him.

But Rao Birendra Singh is an exception. And so is Nanje Gowda, the MP from Karnataka who was expelled from the party in early August for writing a letter to Rajiv Gandhi, urging him to make public every report concerning the assassination of Indira Gandhi. In the letter, which was written in an extremely humble tone, Nanje Gowda had said that since Mrs Gandhi had become an object of reverence for the Indian people, the "government should not keep back any information in its possession or any report that is inculpatory or exculpatory of any individual or group whosoever they may be". This apparently innocuous letter led to his expulsion from the party, which led to his resigning from the Lok Sabha and holding a press conference where he demanded Rajiv Gandhi's resignation for the failure to uncover the truth about Mrs Gandhi's assassination and about the payoffs in the Bofors deal.

Nanje Gowda claims that his resignation has sent ripples through the party and that many Congressmen, disturbed by the goings-on within the government, might act in the interests of the nation—meaning that they would rise in revolt against Rajiv Gandhi. He added that Uttar Pradesh chief minister Narain Dutt Tiwari could easily replace Rajiv Gandhi. Nanje Gowda, however, seems to have been too sanguine. For, Congressmen



Kalpnath Rai: defending the leader

Sharma said that he had grown up with the Congress party and would stand by it till the last breath. But the fact that such demonstrations of loyalty could not reassure the Congress(I) leadership only proved how insecure the party high command was. V.P. Singh might not have succeeded to wean away Congressmen but he had exposed the underlying paranoia gripping the Congress(I).

the weight of Rajiv Gandhi's ill-advisers; many have been humiliated and they truly want to get out," he claims. Pande, who had first quit the Congress immediately after the lifting of the Emergency in 1977 but rejoined the party in 1983, feels that Rajiv Gandhi has debased the organisation, packed its upper echelons with mediocrities and today presides over unprecedented dissidence. Pande is among the people who are certain that something will snap within the Congress(I). "Something is bound to happen," he asserts, "nobody

The Raja has shrewdly triggered a psychological war. He knows he has

still betrayed no signs of rebelling. On the contrary, the voices extolling the Prime Minister's virtues grew louder. Youth Congress(I) president Mukul Wasnik declared: "By introducing the Panchayati Raj Bill and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the Prime Minister has shown that he is aware of grassroots needs and that he is the only person capable of leading the Congress(I) to victory." Added Tariq Anwar, former Bihar PCC(I) chief and Lok Sabha MP from Katihar, in Bihar: "By now it is clear that the party and the country can only unite under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi since he is the only leader today who has a nation-wide appeal."

The view that Congressmen continue to hang on to their party because of Rajiv Gandhi's charisma is, however, as true as the contention that Congressmen are on the verge of uniting against Rajiv Gandhi. If the wily Congressmen show no signs of budging and are swearing undying loyalty to their party, it is because they have no real option. "Many Congress(I) MPs are in contact with Arun Nehru, even with me, and most of

Just as V.P. Singh cannot but be dismayed at the way the Congress(I) continues to hold together, Rajiv Gandhi too cannot presume that the threat of internal revolt has passed. For, betrayal always comes at the last moment

them express dissatisfaction with Rajiv Gandhi's leadership," explains Jan Morcha chief Ram Dhan. "but they will leave the party only if they are given a few assurances about their future". But V.P. Singh so far has failed to provide that assurance.

Congressmen are basically creatures of power and will opt for the Opposition only if they are reasonably sure of being returned to power. "V.P. Singh has cal-

led Congressmen but at the same time he has not given any assurance that they will be given election tickets," points out Ram Dhan. Congressmen, besides, need to be assured that their erstwhile Opposition enemies will not sabotage their electoral prospects. There is no guarantee that Opposition workers, who have battled Congressmen for years, will now suddenly agree to work for them. Moreover, fighting elections requires hard cash, which the Janata Dal does not seem to have too much of. And lastly, every important Congress(I) defector would want a fairly high level party or governmental position in the event of an Opposition victory.

"V.P. Singh unfortunately cannot promise Congressmen anything," says Ram Dhan. "He is a man who attracts people but cannot keep them because he has nothing to offer." And the Raja can offer little even if he wants to. For, senior Opposition leaders want the maximum number of seats for their followers and the maximum share of power, and are in no mood to accommodate turncoats. Even the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is apprehensive about admitting a flood of Congressmen into the Opposition fold. Says BJP general secretary Kedarnath Sahani: "V.P. Singh should be extremely cautious about admitting Congressmen because it is going to create problems of adjustment with other deserving Opposition workers."

"We obviously cannot accommodate every Congressman who wants to join the Janata Dal," admits Rajmangal Pande. "We will only induct people who will prove to be an asset to the party." He argues that V.P. Singh's call was not an empty ploy but a sincere move designed to instil confidence in Congressmen who have political standing and constituencies of their own. Dipen Ghosh, Communist Party of India (Marxist) Rajya Sabha member, considers V.P. Singh's appeal to be of strategic importance for a different reason: "The call to revolt has not just been addressed to Congress(I) MPs and MLAs but to the vast rank and file of the party." Ghosh feels that Congress(I) grassroots supporters had rejected Indira Gandhi in 1977 and could similarly revolt against Rajiv Gandhi's leadership during the next elections.

V.P. Singh's greatest flaw stems from his failure to emerge as the undisputed leader of the Opposition. To this day, his authority is questioned. Chandra Shekhar recently said that he cannot regard V.P. Singh as his leader; Devi Lal at best treats him as an equal;

Ram Dhan (sitting right) with V.P. Singh at a Jan Morcha rally: critical of the Raja's policies





Opposition leaders at a conclave: too many bosses

N.T. Rama Rao is constantly looking for ways to upstage him; and, in the ultimate analysis, V.P. Singh has to compromise with every major political group in the Opposition, ranging from the BJP to the CPI(M). And if anybody is to blame for the Raja Saab's predicament, it is the man himself.

"I had warned him not to leave the value-based politics of the Jan Morcha and join the Opposition for power politics," says an embittered Ram Dhan. "I had told him that the Opposition had lost its attraction and now it simply wanted to exploit the new mass consciousness generated by the Jan Morcha." People like Ram Dhan—and there are many of them—are certain that Opposition unity is transient. Loyal Congressmen like Tariq Anwar aver that even if V.P. Singh comes to power he will not be able to survive or prevail because of fundamental schisms within the Opposition. "Because V.P. Singh is weak he has to try to effect an impossible compromise amongst leftists, rightists and centrists in the Opposition," adds AICC(I) joint secretary Sharafraz Ahmed. And every canny politician knows that this unlikely combination cannot but disintegrate.

Already, the effects of V.P. Singh's political skullduggery are beginning to show. The most damaging perhaps is the fallout of the National Front's understanding with the BJP—a move that has

alienated both Muslim hardliners and the moderates. Syed Shahabuddin has predictably stayed out of the Opposition's joint moves and, recently, the Janata Dal suffered a major setback when the vice-president of its UP unit, Zafar Ali Naqvi, crossed over to the Congress(I), after criticising the Janata Dal leadership for entering into an opportunistic alliance with the BJP. Naqvi was followed by a host of state-level Janata Dal leaders, including Gopal Das Yadav of UP and Jambhwantrao Dhote and Surendra Bhojar from Maharashtra. The next day, a former Union minister, Maganbhai Barot (of the Rashtriya Congress)

V.P. Singh has failed to emerge as the undisputed leader of the Opposition. Chandra Shekhar does not regard him as his leader; Devi Lal treats him as an equal; and N.T. Rama Rao is constantly looking for ways to upstage the Raja

was re-admitted into the Congress(I). The tables were turned on the Pied Piper.

Many Congressmen who might have been contemplating a switch-over halted in their tracks. V.P. Singh had yet to prove himself a survivor and a long-term player. "Even if we lose in the next elections, we have no cause to be worried," says Tariq Anwar. "Spending some time in the Opposition will only ensure the return of the Congress(I) in greater strength." Singh perhaps realises this inherent strength of the Congress(I) and its corollary: that if the Opposition is to stay in power in the long run, it must first break up the Congress(I) monolith. To this end, Singh has kept up his attack, highlighting conflict within the Congress(I) and persistently undermining its leadership. His recent remark that N.D. Tiwari could replace Rajiv Gandhi if only the UP chief minister could summon the requisite courage, sowed yet another seed of potential conflict within the party. But the battle shows no sign of tilting either way. Just as Singh cannot but be dismayed at the way the Congress(I) continues to hold together, Rajiv Gandhi cannot presume that the threat of internal revolt has passed. For, as Rajmangal Pande comments: "Betrayal always comes at the last moment."

Indranil Banerjee/New Delhi

"We are not a crime investigation agency"

Comptroller and Auditor General T.N. Chaturvedi speaks on his report on the Bofors gun deal and the controversy surrounding it

SUNDAY: Why did you decide to conduct an audit of the Bofors gun deal even though the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)—which some Congressmen claim is superior to your office because you are answerable to Parliament—was also going into the deal?

T.N. Chaturvedi: This point has, to some extent, been dealt with in the audit report itself. The contract was concluded in March 1986 and audit had called for the files relating to the purchase of the gun system and ammunitions as well as licence production from the ministry as early as July 1986 before it came to be known in common parlance as Bofors. These, as pointed out in the audit report, were made available to audit from June 1988. The JPC was appointed by the Parliament on 6 August, 1987. Hence any question of a parallel enquiry does not arise.

As you can see again, the JPC had specified terms of reference, whereas my audit was in discharge of Constitutional obligations as well as provisions contained in the Act governing my duties. The scope of audit is also clearly indicated in the audit report itself. As you might have noticed, the audit findings related not only to the selection and purchase of the gun system but also the implementation of the contract, licence production, etc. In any case audit is a continuing process and is not yet over as regards many aspects. Does this mean that the audit should put a stop to all activity about this matter for all times to come? Besides, I do not find any Constitutional provisions. As you know I have explained my stand in my letter to the Speaker. I have the highest regard for Parliament and its committees. But this office is also a creature of the Constitution. The wise, founding fathers of our Constitution envisaged distinct but supportive roles for various institutions, big and small. Actually, CAG reports go to help in ensuring more effective legislative control of administration.

You got your Bofors report cleared by the defence and finance ministries as a matter of procedure, before submitting it to Parliament. Could you please give details of the defence and finance secretaries' reactions?

I am afraid you have to familiarise yourself with audit procedures and verification, checking at various levels. They are very detailed, meticulous and even time-consuming. I do not want to bother you with details. It may suffice to say that the audit report was on defence services. Therefore, any clarification or comments or further documents called for could only be from the ministry of defence. The views of that ministry, as



T.N. Chaturvedi feels that he had no intentions of embarrassing the government

The JPC's findings were at variance with the CAG report



you can see, appear in the audit report. It is not the practice to discuss the report separately with ministries other than the concerned ministry or to obtain any clearance or seek any directions from any ministry. The report is a Constitutional obligation. We present facts as gleaned from government documents. We try to be judicious in our approach and go to all reasonable limits in accommodating or incorporating viewpoints of the ministry. Findings, as they are called, have necessarily to be that of the CAG. We have had personal discussions at various levels and detailed clarifications furnished by the defence ministry were fully and carefully considered even at the stage when the report was in the press.

There were two objections to the Bofors gun deal: (a) it was illegal because it involved payment of commissions/bribes; (b) it was not the best available gun at the time. The government and the ruling party have no answer to the first charge, except that it is impossible to find out who finally got paid off. But the government insists even now that Bofors was the best we could buy. How do you react?

What do you want me to say? Audit has commented only on the procedure and process of the selection of the gun in question. What audit has brought out in the report among others may be summed up briefly as follows:

- the absence of a GSQR for the gun system;
- deficiencies in technical evaluation;
- inadequate follow-up of technical expert advice available within the ministry itself;

- inadequate testing; and
- constraints in the deliberations of the negotiating committee, etc.

All these things are a matter of record. We have not advanced any plea for this or that gun system. We have not passed any judgement on the technical expertise of military or defence specialists. This has been misinterpreted in certain quarters. We have garnered and presented facts for the people and the Parliament to judge their veracity.

As you know, we have not used any words like payoff, commission, bribery, kickbacks, etc., as they have criminal, legal or pejorative connotations. We have used mild, descriptive words like payment and outflow from public exchequer. We are not a crime investigation agency. I reiterate, we bring out facts from government documents and records. The follow-up lies with the executive and Parliament as regards any CAG

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report. Why drag us into what the government says or what the Opposition thinks? My responsibility ends once the report is submitted to the President as required by the Constitution.

You may not react to criticism, but what about ridicule?

(Laughs) Everybody knows ridicule is a substitute for only a weak argument or a non-argument. So why worry? In any case my upbringing was in the villages and I went to ordinary schools. Hence subtleties of colourful expression and even the eloquence of ridicule are beyond my limited comprehension.

Another minister, Sheila Dixit, claimed that the CAG report is "not final and is subject to the PAC of Parliament". Has the PAC ever contradicted a report by the CAG?

I am afraid a good deal of research is required to give a full reply. I do not have even a press officer to explain

simple procedure. I cannot, however, theoretically rule out the possibility of the PAC coming to a conclusion either partly or wholly different from that of audit based on oral evidence by representatives of government and on the basis of fresh documents produced before the PAC. I cannot, however, recall any instance where the findings of the PAC were totally at variance with those of audit. As you know the PAC only takes up a few items and not all the reports and comes up with its recommendations. It is expected that government will respond constructively concerning other items.

I am not aware of what a particular minister said and hence I will make no personal reference. But who claims "finality" and for what? The scheme of audit is that our findings are final, being based on records as are made available to audit at a point of time. That is why the CAG report gets remitted to PAC, and CAG or his representatives would be present at the PAC sittings for clarifications during recording of evidence. This was not so when JPC recorded its evidence.

You asked Parliament for daily reports on the House proceedings after your Bofors report was placed so that you could explain everything. What was the response from Parliament? Did they keep you informed?

I made a request to the secretaries-general of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, who duly placed my request to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and chairman of the Rajya Sabha. I have received the uncorrected proceedings of the debates in the two Houses and have gone through them for my information. I hold the members of Parliament, as I have repeatedly said, in high regard. I do not think it is really necessary to make any comments in this regard. The CAG report, though it is small, is precise and self-explanatory. It is not politically motivated or given deliberately to embarrass the government or anybody else.

Was the CAG's office responsible for leaking the Bofors and Westland reports to the press? At a lower level, perhaps?

To the best of my information, I do not think there was any leakage of the Bofors report. Our office had made it clear that the report was neither shown to, nor seen by, nor shared with, anybody except authorised people in the government. Our tradition is of complete confidentiality and we adhere to it. No essential feature of the report appeared anywhere. Speculation started



due to the delay in submission of the report to Parliament.

My attention has been drawn to a report appearing in a newspaper about Westland helicopters. It does not seem to disclose any substantive aspects. The system in the department is on a "need-to-know" basis. The officers responsible for a particular audit do get in touch with ministries/departments. Only after I have finally approved the printed report and signed it, does it become the CAG's report which is presented to the President of India. Really there has been no report as yet on Westland helicopters. The trouble is that even if there is a difference between the management and the company auditor or within the management itself, and something is given by somebody, it is attributed to us. I have come across such cases in respect of some state governments.

Would you say that the institution of the CAG has become stronger or weaker in the past few months? How do you respond to the attacks being mounted on you by Congressmen and ministers?

I have every hope that the institution of CAG will continue to grow stronger and stronger. It has its own intrinsic worth in our democratic set-up. It is likely that some criticism, as one comes across, could have been due to inadequate appreciation of the role of the CAG. It is not for me to respond to any so-called attacks on me. I have tried to do my modest duty with a modicum of intellectual integrity. By and large, people have known me wherever I have worked and I have received ample affection and consideration from the people. I have only gratefulness for their generous appreciation. I do not think even the ministers had any reservations about me when I worked in the government. What else is there for me to say?

Some Congressmen even accuse you of being an RSS man. What do you have to say?

I do not know what you mean by 'RSS man'. I have never been a member of the RSS. As a public servant and a proud citizen of the country, my loyalty has been to the spirit and ideals of the Constitution. I have treated a citizen as a citizen and want to be treated as such. I am now hearing of such an accusation, especially since the last few weeks. Many distinguished ministers of state and central governments and other equally eminent people in other walks of public life like the judiciary, bar, academia and public services in the country have known me from my school and college days. I do not know what other awards will spread as part of the

Why drag us into what the government says or what the Opposition thinks? My responsibility ends once the report is submitted to the President as required by the Constitution

whispering campaign which has been started now, not when I was secretary to government, home ministry or department of justice appointed by the former Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi.

Is there any precedent for the sort of confrontation that has taken place between your office and the government?

I refuse to believe that there is any confrontation taking place between this office and the government. There could have been, even earlier, some instances of misunderstanding about the role and scope of audit but the Speaker and the Public Accounts Committee have always been quick to uphold the role of the CAG. Particularly, the PACs have on such occasions come out with strong recommendations justifying the audit of CAG. You will have to go through some parliamentary proceedings and PAC reports.

B.R. Ambedkar described yours as "probably the most important office in the Constitution of India" and said your duties were "far more important than the duties of the judiciary" and your status "far greater than the judiciary's". Why?

I have the highest regard for the late B.R. Ambedkar. Not only was he one of the main architects of the Constitution but was also a great scholar and visionary, deeply imbued with a passion for social justice. The main reason, I suppose, why he attached great importance to the institution of the CAG of India is the special role assigned to him under the Constitution in respect of parliamentary financial control and public accountability. He has only emphasised his feelings in a strong manner.

As a student of history, law and social sciences, I deem the judiciary as the bulwark of civil liberties and a balancing wheel of the Constitution. A citizen can ill-afford to forget this in a democracy.

Is your role simply that of an auditor of government departments



Opposition leaders chalking out their strategies on the eve of the monsoon session of Parliament

and are you meant to confine yourself to financial implications and not comment on administrative actions? What was the precedent of the Krishna Menon jeep case and the PAC's comments on your role then?

Most of the administrative decisions have financial implications. It is, therefore, difficult to draw a rigid line between financial and administrative decisions. Moreover, they have to be related to objectives and purposes. It is the purposefulness of these decisions that matters. Each such case has to be carefully considered and decided on its merit. You can check up the relevant PAC report from the Lok Sabha secretariat. I can just recall that the committee probably said that it was the duty of the CAG to ensure that the expenditure has been incurred with faithfulness, wisdom and economy. That is why the concepts of 'comprehensive audit', 'value for money', and 'performance audit' are evolving all over the world in the profession and discipline of audit as well as administration.

I would, however, like to say that we do not pass judgement on governmental policy or substitute our judgement in place of that of the government. We only comment on the administration, implementation or management of the policy to bring out its end results. Sometimes we indicate from documents as to what inadequacies seem to emerge not only in



the implementation but also in the processes, procedures, database, etc., which may affect the decision-making adversely. What is so wrong about it?

You met the President recently. How did the meeting go and what did you discuss?

Well, as a functionary under the Constitution, I do call on the President of India periodically, almost once every two or three months formally to pay my regards. Naturally, in such meetings I keep the President apprised of my work in general. It is not for me to discuss any specific problem, as responsibility for my action rests with me. I wonder if it is worthwhile or whether there is any need to refer to these periodic courtesy visits.

The new Panchayati Raj Bill talks of more powers to CAG. What new powers are envisaged?

Presently, the audit of *panchayats* is not my constitutional responsibility except where the assistance by the state exceeds certain financial limits. The proposed amendment now seeks to entrust us with responsibility. My officers have had discussions with the senior officers of the concerned ministry of rural development and law. Our viewpoint has been made clear to the government. We must have clear-cut sanction and authority. A viable operational system must exist. Much will depend on the state Acts when they are passed. Our audit will be simple and effective as we do want local initiative to flourish. I have set up an internal committee to study these problems. Even at higher levels

there is no appreciation of the role and responsibilities of CAG occasionally. I do not want my office to be discussed in a pejorative manner in the *panchayats* scattered all over the country. We do hope states will provide under the statutes the primary framework for audit on a selective basis so that accountability and performance along with local initiative and planning are achieved as everybody desires. As you know we have accountants-general in each state; they will conduct and supervise the work allotted to them on a decentralised basis in keeping with the spirit of local planning and government.

Some ruling party members say that even if your report does not pass any judgement on military or technical expertise, it may under-

To the best of my information, I do not think there was any leakage of the Bofors report. Our office had made it clear that the report was neither shown to, nor seen by, nor shared with anybody, except authorised people in the government

mine the morale of our defence forces and politicise them.

(Looking serious) I think such a statement is a complete travesty of truth. It misinterprets facts and views them in a completely distorted perspective. As patriotic guardians of our national security, they can very well judge what is good for them. Their morale will only be boosted, and not undermined, when they know that people in the country are alert, that they do not find themselves handicapped due to inadequacy of material support, despite their valour in situations of war. Why this outcry and furore only because of one chapter in this report? What about the other parts of this report or the one dealing with other wings of defence? Did we not mention about defective ammunition last year? What is wrong in drawing attention to some procedural irregularities and defects? Why not improve them to heighten the morale? I am sorry I have to say that military history has some lessons in this regard. Our defence forces which are the integral part of the citizenry of this democratic country have a mature understanding of democratic processes. It is the political approach or insinuation that tends to cloud issues. A national approach to defence only strengthens morale and the sense of direction. They can well understand the real purpose of the report. The crux of the report is that the country's security and defence expenditure should only be further strengthened by adequate quality and quantity of weapons system and other material support which the defence forces may need. So why invent a new demonology?

Do you believe you have carved out a place for yourself in the history of independent India?

Please no! I have no such pretensions. I do not suffer from any illusions. I have always maintained that the individual is unimportant and what is relevant is the importance of the institution and the team spirit in work. I am not cast in any heroic mould. And we should clearly understand that it is the traditions laid by my predecessors and the exacting, hard and meticulous work by my officers at different levels that enables the CAG to perform his Constitutional obligations. It is to them that all credit and appreciation should go if there is anything good that this institution represents in our democratic set-up. The more important question should, in my view, be whether the institution of the CAG of India fulfilled the expectations of the founding fathers of the Constitution. How can it be reinforced to do much more in times to come?

Interviewed by Nirmal Mitra



Trading charges

The Bofors counter-trade agreement. As controversial as the howitzer deal?

For long, the Government of India has countered all criticism of the controversial Rs 1,700-crore howitzer deal by arguing that the gun was the best available at the price. It arranged field demonstrations to establish that the 155 mm howitzers were excellent and resorted to a number of disingenuous arguments to show that they were bought cheap. There is, however, one argument—which, on the face of it, is persuasive and compelling—that New Delhi has rarely (or never) used to defend the purchase. That the deal with the Swedish arms manufacturer included a counter-trade agreement and that this will earn the country an impressive Rs 850 crores (exactly half the contract figure) in foreign exchange.

Bofors was the first major defence deal which had an 'export obligation' tagged to it. Under the counter-trade agreement, which was finalised in February 1987 (a year after the howitzer contract was signed), Bofors agreed to help secure Rs 850 crores of Indian exports by 1995, when the last consignment of guns are expected to be delivered in India. The memorandum of understanding signed between the company and the State Trading Corporation (STC), which was nominated by the Indian government to channelise the exports for a 0.25 per cent commission, explicitly states that the objective of the counter-trade agreement is to "increase Indian exports to Sweden". (This is to be achieved either through Bofors directing Swedish importers to exporters in India or through direct purchases made by the company's principal, Nobel Industries.) Moreover, that the purpose of the counter-trade agreement is "to generate additional exports and not to divert existing exports from India". In other words, it won't do if Bofors arranges the purchase of goods that are already being exported from India. The idea was to increase exports—by getting Bofors to import 'slow-moving' or 'additional' items.

It is curious that New Delhi has chosen to underplay the significance of the counter-trade agreement—arguably its best defence against critics of the Bofors

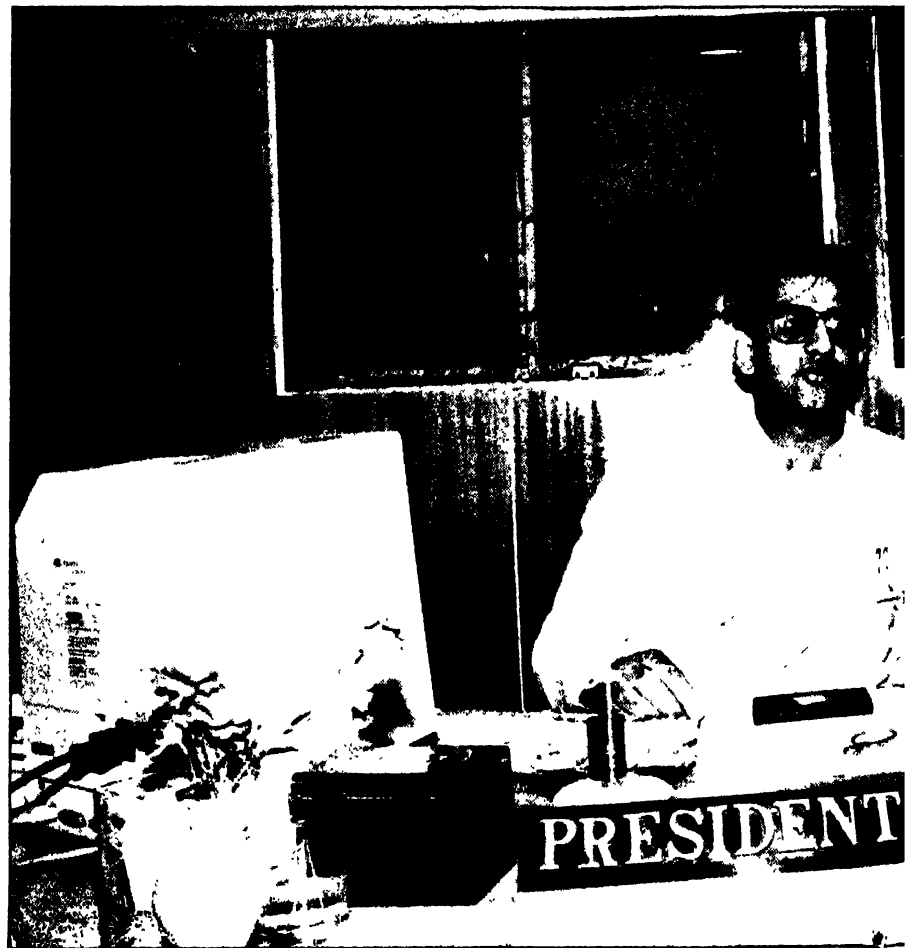
deal. But perhaps it is not so surprising after all. Investigations conducted by SUNDAY reveal that there are a number of aspects concerning the fulfilment of the counter-trade agreement that the government is unlikely to want publicised. They include:

- Out of a total Rs 850-crore figure, Bofors arranged to import a staggering Rs 500-crore worth of goods from one Indian company owned by Adil Shahryar. Shahryar is the son of Rajya Sabha MP Mohammad Yunus, who is very close to the centre of power in New Delhi, and till recently was the chairman of the Trade Fair Authority of India.
- The Rs 500-crore contract (which is now uncertain to go through) with Shahryar's Delhi-based company, Inde-

pendent Consultancy Services (ICS), was for the export of computer software—hardly a 'slow-moving' or 'additional' item. The contract—which Shahryar claims was put through with the help of the government and processed by the ministry of commerce and the STC—was awarded to a company whose assets are well under Rs 5 crores.

- The manner in which the counter-trade is proceeding indicates that it is highly unlikely to substantially increase India's exports to Sweden.

- The 'additionality clause'—which was included to ensure that existing exports from India were not included in the counter-trade purchases—has been ignored. Among the counter-trade ex-



ports are commodities which are India's principal exports, such as tobacco, jute goods and cotton textiles.

Shahryar's Rs 500-crore contract is, therefore, only part of the story. And although the deal is now jeopardised because of some objections by the STC, it raises a few questions. For one, why did the government initially allow Rs 500 crores of counter-trade to be in the form of computer software—a popular Indian export? Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, why was one small computer firm allowed the major share (60 per cent) of the total counter-trade figure of Rs 850 crores? Moreover, how did Shahryar swing it? After all, Independent Consultancy Services, to understate the point, is hardly a computer giant.

Shahryar, at any rate, has an answer to the third question. The Berkeley University computer engineering gradu-

ate, who did a stint in a US prison after being convicted for fraud and conspiracy, says that it was Bofors who approached him for software exports after it signed the counter-trade agreement with the STC. For a man who runs a business of his size, this was a god-sent opportunity. Moreover, he has been under considerable pressure of late. He has been asked to vacate the premises in Delhi's Pragati Maidan, where his centre for computer training, Priyadarshini Institute, is located; has found that the banks have become uncooperative; and been involved in a court case over property he owns in the Okhla industrial estate.

By his own account, he was keen on the contract and his close associate, Ali Siddiqui, made several trips to Sweden to negotiate it. After the contract was finalised (Bofors' president Per Ove Morberg personally worked out the modalities), Shahryar, whose installed

capacity for software production was nowhere near the export requirement, sought a licence to set up a manufacturing unit in the NOIDA free trade zone (FTZ). He applied for a unit with a maximum capacity of Rs 500 crores annually.

For a while, Shahryar believed that all was well. He even told the Prime Minister about the project he had bagged. Even before the STC finished processing his case, he received orders worth US \$5.87 million (approximately Rs 10 crores) from two companies nominated by Bofors. They are Scitech Services of Singapore and the United States-based De Comp.

Then suddenly, on 11 May this year, Shahryar received a facsimile message from Bofors (see document), which stated that the STC had directed that counter-trade would not be allowed with companies registered in a free trade zone and asked him to confirm that his company wasn't. Unfortunately for him, it was. Shahryar is now upset over the fate of the contract. "Bofors wants quick results from us and is getting into a panic. The whole deal will go down the drain thanks to the STC and people like Dinesh Singh who run the commerce ministry." Adds his associate Ali Siddiqui, who is the founder and organising secretary of the Priyadarshini Institute: "We had planned to open computer education centres all over the country with the earnings from Bofors. But with the way the STC is running the show, everything is now under a cloud."

A disappointed Shahryar now claims that "the STC has turned the whole business of counter-trade into a farce". He describes the STC as a "raddi-dealer" and a "rubber stamp", which has allowed Bofors to pay commissions to exporters in order to fulfil its counter-trade obligations. He also says that big businessmen have been allowed to make routine exports under the guise of counter-trade. "In the middle of this deal are large export houses belonging to people like the Jajodias and the Hinduja who are carrying on normal exports in the name of the Bofors contract," he alleges. If, as Shahryar says, the Hinduja are in on the deal, the government needs to do a lot of answering. How could New Delhi have allowed the London-based expatriate brothers—who have been accused of being middlemen for the howitzer contract—a slice of the counter-trade? How did the brothers get in on this too? Could they have used their apparently considerable influence in New Delhi's political corridors?

When SUNDAY raised Shahryar's complaints with a senior official in the

Adli Shahryar; (Inset) the office of his Independent Consultancy Services: nearly got lucky



Why was one small computer firm, the ICS, allowed the major share of the total counter-trade figure of Rs 850 crores? And how did Shahryar swing it? After all, the ICS is hardly a computer giant



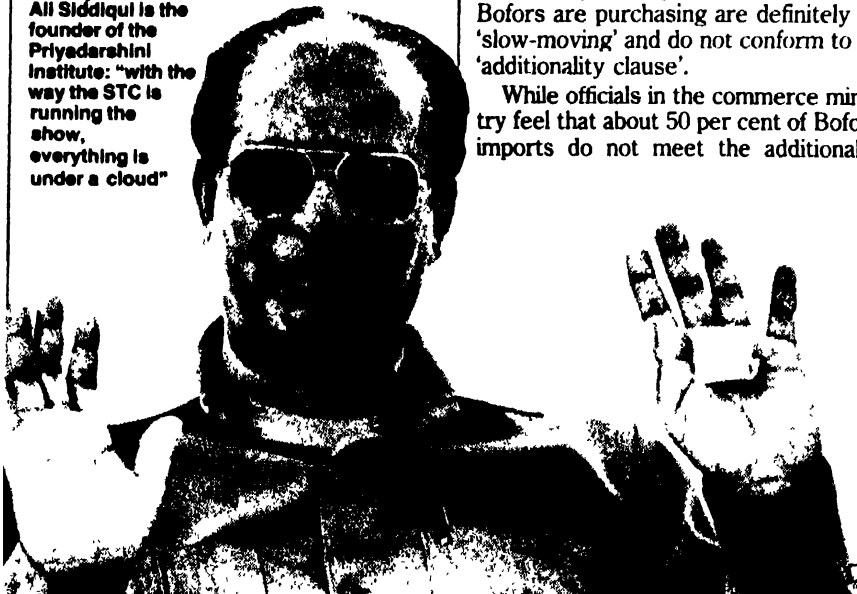
INVESTIGATION

commerce ministry, he said that the problem had less to do with the STC than Shahryar. He claimed that the STC's objection that counter-trade cannot be carried out from a free trade zone was a valid one since anyone with an FTZ licence is obliged to export his product anyway. Allowing someone who operates out of a free trade zone to counter-trade would defeat the additionality clause of the agreement, he argued, adding that Shahryar "could have kept Bofors in the dark about this".

The official agreed that the manner in which counter-trade has taken place could be faulted for not satisfying the additionality requirement. He admitted that, besides computer software, a number of items in the counter-trade list cannot be classified under 'slow-moving' exports. "We do not know which countries and which companies the goods being imported by Bofors will go to. So how can we know whether these companies were not importing the same goods from us earlier?" he asks.

STC officials were unwilling to comment on whether the additionality requirement is being violated. But the facts are incontrovertible. In the original agreement signed between Bofors and the STC, only items falling under 11 categories were identified for export. Among them were foodstuffs, beverages, ores, metals and minerals (all listed under one category), chemicals and pharmaceuticals, manufactured goods, non-electrical machinery, transport equipment, finished goods and other products like soyabean extractions, etc. The counter-trade has followed a very different pattern. Even if one goes by the information provided by the minister of state for commerce, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, in Parliament,

Shahryar's associate Ali Siddiqui is the founder of the Priyadarshini Institute: "with the way the STC is running the show, everything is under a cloud"



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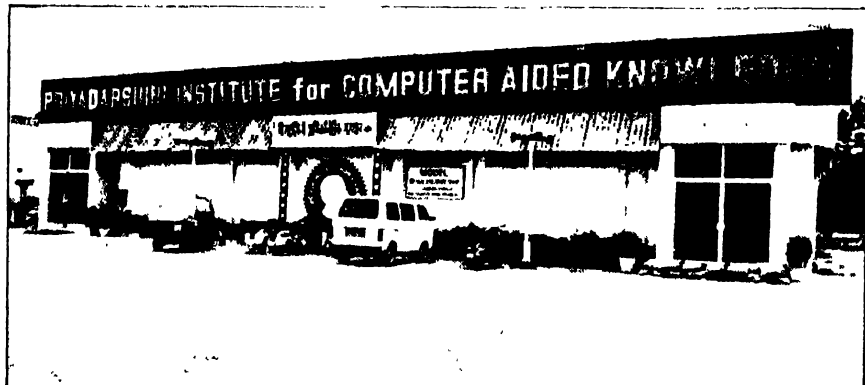
MESSAGE: Dear Sir,
STC has informed us that exports from FTZ OR EDU will not be allowed under the agreement. As your proposal is under consideration, please inform that you are not in FTZ. Yours faithfully, [Signature]

The facsimile message from Bofors to ICS, stating the STC's directive: causing problems for Shahryar

large consignments of goods, such as tobacco, jute, spices and cotton textiles have already been transacted under the counter-trade agreement. For instance, AB Bofors with subsidiaries is importing tobacco, Carnegie coffee, Swedish government-purchasing agencies, spices, AB Elov Hasson, tea and Mantra Interna-

requirement, some traders believe that 90 per cent of the counter-trade will cut into existing exports. Says a well-known Delhi exporter, "Why would Bofors want to export pickles and thread from India? The company is simply subsidising normal exports by paying the foreign importers commissions of up to ten per cent to make them deal with Indian manufacturers." He points out that some foreign companies such as Helm AG of Sweden (which has concluded Rs 19.6 crores of counter-trade through Bofors) and the Swiss Andre and Cie (which has imported Rs 7.1 crores worth) are well known in India as they have imported large amounts of goods before. "They have somehow been roped in by Bofors for the deal and are possibly cutting in on regular Indian exports," he says.

It is also very doubtful whether the counter-trade will meet its objective of increasing India's exports to Sweden, which stood at a paltry Rs 52.94 lakhs last year. If there was a substantial rise in this figure, then the government could argue that the howitzer contract has actually generated exports, but this is



tional, frozen shrimps. The commodities the foreign companies nominated by Bofors are purchasing are definitely not 'slow-moving' and do not conform to the 'additionality clause'.

While officials in the commerce ministry feel that about 50 per cent of Bofors' imports do not meet the additionality

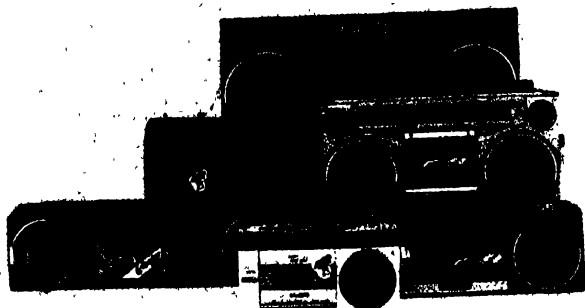
unlikely to happen. From all indications, a lot of Bofors' imports are being channelised to companies in other countries, which may have bought those goods anyway. Says Swedish journalist Per Wendel, "Why would Sweden want to import items covered under counter-trading from India? We manufacture, say, enough bicycle parts in Sweden to last us 2,000 years." Add to this the suspicion that Bofors has paid commissions to foreign companies to tempt them into buying from India and one wonders what good the counter-trade agreement has done for this country. It is no surprise then that the government has not chosen to advance the counter-trade argument to bolster its case for purchasing the howitzer. Like the Rs 1,700-crore gun deal, there are too many facts about this one that it would prefer to bury.

Ritu Sarin/New Delhi



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Recycling the old charisma

V.P. Singh peddles Gandhianism on wheels

Prince Siddhartha renounced worldly pleasures to meditate under a peepul tree and went on to become Gautama the Buddha. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi traded a promising legal career for the loincloth, helped liberate India from the clutches of the British and became the Mahatma. V.P. Singh, the erstwhile Raja of Manda, got on a cycle after a gap of 34 years, pedalled furiously for 30 km under a scorching sun and felt one step closer to being the hero of the people.

It happened last week. On the morning of 6 August, after watching *Mahabharat* on TV, the Raja and his band of followers (with a BBC TV crew in attendance) set off from Kanpur's Circuit House. They first went to Moti Jheel, a famous park in the city, to blowing bugles and chants of "*Raja nahin yeh sant hai, Congress ka ant hai*". There, the Raja described his cycle *yatra* as a symbol of "people's power versus money power" as he mounted his brand new blue and white Hero sports

bicycle. And then the whole group left for Unnao, a small town 30 km from Kanpur.

Symbols play a crucial role in the politics of this country. Mahatma Gandhi understood this and donned the loincloth—the badge of poverty. Taking a

Janata Dal strategists are experimenting with the Gandhian modes of mass communication—the cycle *yatra* being the Raja's first salvo in the forthcoming battle for Uttar Pradesh

cue from the Mahatma, Dal strategists are experimenting with Gandhian modes of mass communication—the cycle *yatra* being the Raja's first salvo in the forthcoming battle for UP. "Jawaharlal Nehru had said, 'India has reached the cycle age', years back. Ironically, during his lifetime, Congressmen had given up cycles and *padayatras* and found other ways of moving. However, V.P. Singh has taken to this Gandhian style of mass contact," says Virendra Nath Dixit, a Dal MLA from Kanpur city. Dixit, who prides himself on being one of the main organisers of the cycle rally, travelled alongside his mentor all the way to Unnao, where the *yatra* concluded.

Two-wheelers have been a fixture of the Raja's politics. He campaigned on a motorcycle when he contested the Assembly elections from Tindwari (he was chief minister at the time). Much to the delight of cameramen, he repeated this during the Allahabad by-election last June. The sweeping victory at Allahabad obviously convinced the Raja that the medium was the message. And there he



(From left) V.P. Singh with supporters and fellow-cyclists before the start of the yatra; the Raja's entourage pedals its way towards Unnao; and, V.P. Singh being garlanded by Dal activists: adopting Gandhian means of communication

was once again, out in the blazing heat on the highway, pedalling away furiously along with 700-odd party activists wearing green headbands. Fellow cyclists (present were some football players and women volunteers of the Dal in green kurta-pyjamas) waved their green flags. The streets were a riot of green as the Raja and his entourage went past. "It looks just like the Bharatiya Lok Dal," reminisced the BBC's Mark Tully. Tully and his television crew are doing a curtain-raiser on the general elections. The cycle yatra no doubt will lend their programme colour and pageantry.

Initially, the plans were grander. The Raja and his band were supposed to pedal all the way to Lucknow. They were to arrive in the state capital on 9 August, when the Opposition-sponsored "Save India Day" was held. The date was significant because it was on this date that the Mahatma had given the "Quit India" call.

But the Raja's plan had to be changed because of an emergency meeting of the National Front at Delhi to discuss the Opposition's joint action plan on the controversial Panchayati Raj Bill. Opposition unity being a greater cause, and of more

immediate importance, the Dal president settled for cycling up to Unnao, a mere 30 km from Kanpur.

Cycling is something which the Raja obviously has great respect for. Addressing the crowd which had gathered at Moti Jheel at Kanpur to flag off the rally, the Raja said that when the Opposition comes to power, all MLAs and MPs would be requested to undertake cycle yatras through their constituencies once a month. Sanjay Singh, the secretary-general of the Dal's UP unit who accompanied the Raja on the yatra, acting almost like his bodyguard,

proved he was a keen cyclist. "I love cycling," said the scion of Amethi. Much was made of the Raja's love for the humble bicycle. Virendra Nath Dixit noted in one of the hand-outs given out to pressmen who came to watch the show: "Mr V.P. Singh learnt cycling at the age of six on a tricycle. He used a Hercules cycle during his university days in Allahabad. And now he is cycling after 34 years—the last time he used a cycle being 1955."

It was the stuff television crews dream of. There was colour, spectacle, music and (hold your breath) dance.

The cycle yatra was scheduled to start at 9 am, but the participants, who squatted on the floor of the Circuit House watching *Mahabharat*, had no intentions of leaving until the serial was over.

When the Raja made his entry in a spotless white kurta and pyjama, there was loud cheering from the TV buffs. Tully and his crew were filming away as the Raja sat down and joined the audience.

Cut to Moti Jheel, where crowds had collected. The Raja stopped for breakfast at a friend's house en route to the park from the Circuit House. Meanwhile, the local organiser of the yatra

V.P. Singh and his supporters rest at Nehru Bagh on way to Unnao : Taking a break



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*"I know, you keep racing against
time. But must you
always prefer the sky to the sea?"*



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attempted to keep the crowd which has gathered to witness the "historic" flag-off in good humour by making digs at Rajiv Gandhi. "There were so many women in this country to choose from. But why did Rajiv have to marry a *videshi*?" asked a speaker.

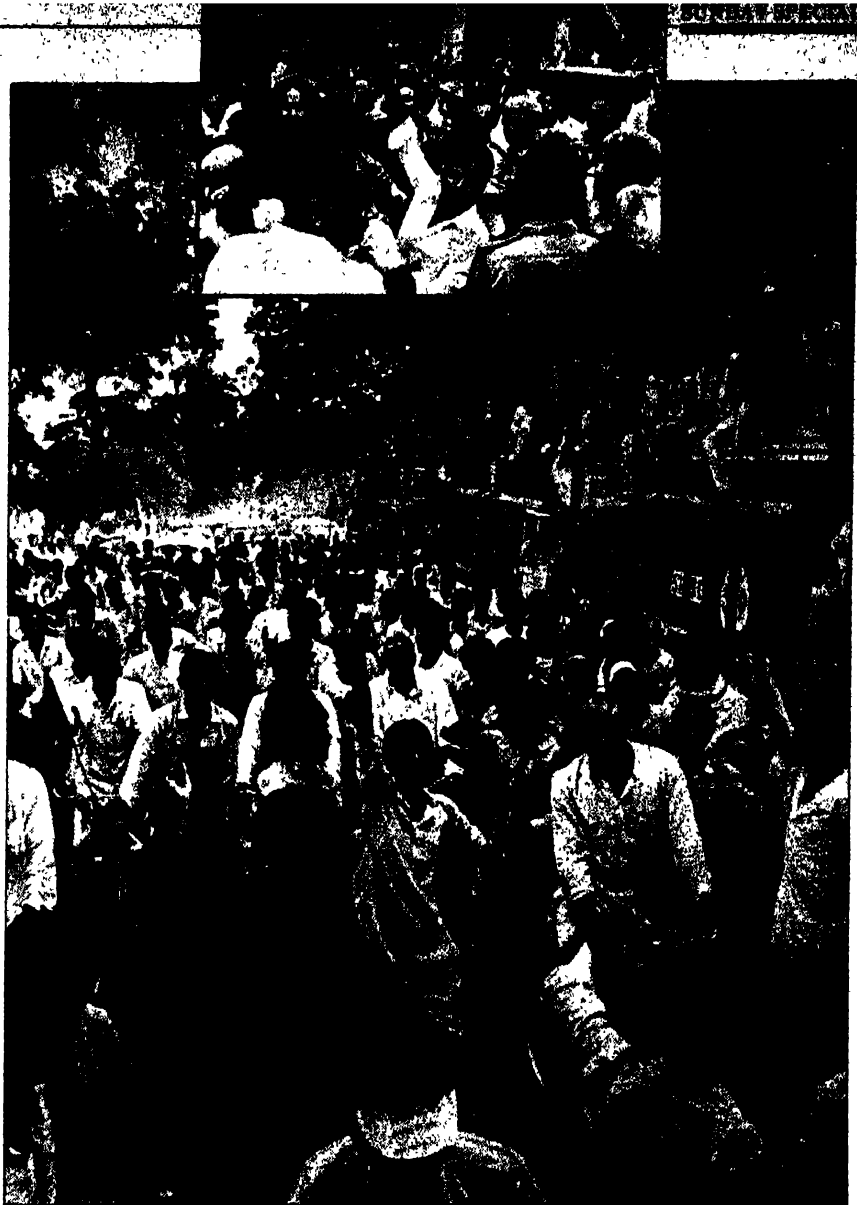
The Raja and his band finally came. The rush of people surrounding V.P. Singh was so great that the public address system snapped. Only those within ten feet of the Raja could hear him speak on how the Dal and "people's power" were going to fight Rajiv and his "money power". "We will fight them like Vietnam fought USA," the Raja boasted.

The speeches over, V.P. Singh tied a green band around his forehead and got on his sports cycle. The crowds cheered and cameras clicked. Flanked by the suave Sanjay Singh and with a local corporator blowing a bugle to announce the departure, V.P. Singh and his fellow cyclists began the long journey towards Unnao. And as the entourage passed through the crowded streets of Kanpur, slogans like, "*Ab to yeh spasht hai, Rajiv Gandhi bhrasht hai*," rent the air. The local police escorted the Raja and his band all the way through Kanpur to prevent any confrontation between Dal workers and Congress(I) members. At one place, Congress(I) workers did try to disrupt the *yatra* by staging a demonstration, but the alert cops chased them away.

The journey through Kanpur itself took a lot of time as V.P. Singh was stopped at several places by Dal workers who garlanded him and shook hands with the Raja. The entourage then stopped at the local Ganesh Park where both V.P. Singh and Sanjay Singh paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi. By now, the Raja looked visibly tired as the scorching sun beat down on the cyclists.

It must have been a great relief for the harried cyclists to cross the city limits as the crowd literally pushed V.P. Singh around wherever he went. The heat too had taken its toll on the *yatris*. A sharp shower, however, brought down the temperature appreciably. V.P. Singh stopped at a toll tax booth, changed clothes and set off again.

Lunch was served at Magarwar village. The Raja looked very tired and wanted to stay away from the crowds, especially from the vast army of reporters and photographers who were tailing him. But that was not to be, and V.P. Singh had to answer questions from newsmen even while resting. "How does it feel?" asked a scribe. The Raja shot back: "How does it feel in a war? Rajiv Gandhi represents big money. Our



The cyclists arrive in Unnao; (inset) police hold back Congress(I) protesters in Kanpur: grand success

bicycles will combat his helicopters ... From now on till the elections, there will be one cycle rally every month in all the districts of UP."

A festive spirit had gripped the small

As the cyclists passed through villages, people cheered and greeted them. The meetings at Kanpur and Unnao were also well-attended. But it is too early to say whether V.P. Singh can transform the enthusiasm of the masses into votes

town of Unnao as the people patiently waited for the Raja's entourage to arrive. And as soon as the cyclists were spotted, the crowds went into raptures, As V.P. Singh and his company entered the town, rose petals were showered and loudspeakers blurted out slogans. A band playing patriotic tunes welcomed Singh and people danced on the streets. The cycle *yatra* ended with a well-attended public meeting at Unnao, where V.P. Singh hit out against Rajiv Gandhi. He waved a copy of the CAG report and dwelt at length on the Bofors controversy.

It is too early to say whether V.P. Singh can transform the enthusiasm of the people into votes. But there is no doubt that the cycle *yatra* provided the much needed shot in the arm for Dal workers.

Patralekha Chatterjee/Kanpur

A Congress obsession?

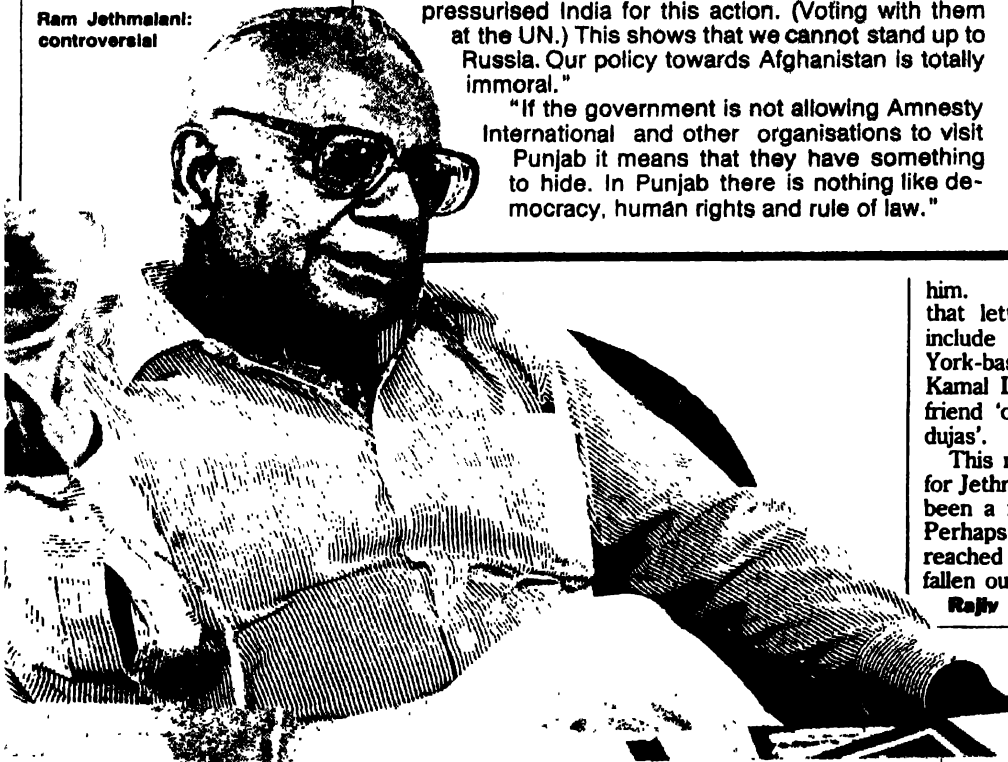
How credible are the ruling party's charges against Ram Jethmalani?

The Congress(I) thinks it has found an issue to match the Opposition's parliamentary obsession with Bofors. Each day, Congress MPs bring up Ram Jethmalani's name in the Rajya Sabha and accuse him of being a Khalistani supporter. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, too, seems to think that this is a big issue and mentions Jethmalani at every public meeting.

But is the voluble lawyer-MP really a proponent of Khalistan? Some months ago, Rajiv Gandhi drew attention to a booklet published by Jethmalani's Bharat Mukti Morcha which made several erroneous statements (such as the claim that the Sikhs were promised a state of their own before Independence) and asked for a Sikh state in which the central government would have virtually no say. While not secessionist, such a demand was extraordinary and Rajiv Gandhi was on strong ground as he tore into Jethmalani. It is not clear that the current controversy has as strong a basis.

The present uproar has its roots in Jethmalani's recent trip to the United States and England. While there, he

Ram Jethmalani: controversial



ਭਾਰਤ ਮੁਕਤੀ ਮੋਰਚਾ

ਪ੍ਰੋ. ਜੇਠਮਲਾਨੀ 22 ਅਗਸਤ 1989 ਨੂੰ ਦਿੱਲੀ ਵਿਖੇ ਸੰਸਦ ਵਿੱਚ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਹੋਏ

ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ

The Jethmalani interview in *Des Pardes*

appeared on TV and gave interviews to newspapers. The Congress(I) believes that what he said was secessionist and unpatriotic.

There can be no doubt that the Rajya Sabha MP from Karnataka was less than flattering about Rajiv and his regime. Asked by *Des Pardes*, a Sikh paper, what he thought of the current state of India, Jethmalani launched into his familiar diatribe about Indira and Rajiv Gandhi and how they subverted the institution of democracy.

What Jethmalani said

"In India today, democracy and rule of the people are totally destroyed...Those who oppose the government are not safe especially the Sikhs. Since Operation Bluestar no Sikh considers himself safe."

"India tilts to the Soviet Union. Soviets must have pressurised India for this action. (Voting with them at the UN.) This shows that we cannot stand up to Russia. Our policy towards Afghanistan is totally immoral."

"If the government is not allowing Amnesty International and other organisations to visit Punjab it means that they have something to hide. In Punjab there is nothing like democracy, human rights and rule of law."

On Punjab, he was more specific: "No Sikh feels he is safe", adding, "it is fortunate that Pakistan has a lot of internal problems. If there had been an Indo-Pak war then Punjab would have been totally finished."

All of this is quite offensive to the government. But is it secessionist? Jethmalani says it isn't. For instance, when he was pointedly asked if Rajiv ran a Hindu government, (Jethmalani, as a Sindhi, believes in the Granth Sahib), he was clear that this was not the case. "This government cannot be called a Hindu government because it is ill-treating both Hindus and Sikhs equally."

What he has done, however, is give vent to his rabid anti-communism, claiming that India's communist parties take orders from Moscow and arguing that India's Afghanistan policy is a "disgrace" that has its origins in pressure from Moscow. This, says the foreign ministry, is unpatriotic and against India's interests. Nonsense, counters Jethmalani, it is against Moscow's interests and these are not the same as India's.

Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the matter, the Congress(I) seems to have decided that a replay of its Opposition-supports-Khalistan line will work as well in 1989 as it did in 1984. Hence the attacks on Jethmalani.

So far, all the lawyer-MP has done in his defence is write an angry letter to Rajiv penned in his usual offensive style, accusing the government of concocting lies about

him. Most of what he says in that letter is predictable but it does include a strange attack on a New York-based non-resident Indian called Kamal Dhandona described as being a friend 'of Satish Sharma and the Hinduja's'.

This marks a notable shift of stance for Jethmalani who, to date, has clearly been a friend of the Hinduja's himself. Perhaps his enmity with Rajiv has reached the stage where they have fallen out with their one mutual friend.

Rajiv Shukla/New Delhi

Power to the citizen

The Nagarpalika Bill is the urban equivalent of the Panchayati Raj Bill

When local self-government is the catch-word in rural India, can cities and towns be far behind?

Close on the heels of the Panchayati Raj Bill, introduced by the Prime Minister in the last session of Parliament, comes its corollary, the Nagarpalika Bill. Last week, a truncated Lok Sabha passed in one sitting the twin constitutional amendment Bills—the 64th and 65th amendments, technically redesignated the 62nd and 63rd amendments of the Constitution.

Hailed by the ruling party as "the most significant systemic change since the adoption of the Constitution 40 years ago" and "an instrument for reducing and eventually eliminating the role of power-brokers in urban India", the Nagarpalika Bill is formulated in much the same mould as its predecessor for rural areas.

The Opposition regarded the introduction and passing of the two Bills on the eve of the elections as "gimmickry". Opposition leaders unanimously voiced their objections to the Bills outside Parliament. They protested against the "manner" in which they have been framed, and the "speed" with which they were passed.

"My objection to these Bills is that they have been formulated by the government without consulting us, introduced and drafted in a hurry on the eve of the general elections. So the inference is obvious: the motive is political," said M.S. Gurupadaswamy of the Janata Dal. "Good intentions can be marred by bad means and bad strategy. We are all for real devolution of power to the states, but this is only cosmetic," he added. The state governments, too, feel threatened that the Bills will, in fact, considerably reduce their powers.

Broadly, the Nagarpalika Bill seeks to create a three-tier system of municipal bodies with a new institution of *nagar panchayats* at the base, followed by municipal councils and corporations.

The new legislation envisages a more

vital role for urban local bodies. While India's urban areas produce about half the country's gross national product, they also house a significant number (approximately 28 per cent as estimated in 1983-84) of people who subsist below the poverty line. The Nagarpalika Bill seeks to encourage people to participate in the planning process and the implementation of local development schemes, including special programmes for the alleviation of poverty.

With the Nagarpalika Bill, finance commissions will be constituted in every state. Under the present structure,

bodies, it could have set up a special fund instead of using centrally-sponsored schemes like the IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme) and the Jawahar Rozgar over the heads of the state governments."

What has exercised the Opposition most, however, is a clause in the new Bill according to which elections to urban bodies are to be supervised and conducted by the Election Commission and its accounts audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. "Is this decentralisation?" asks Dipen Ghosh of the CPI(M). "Already the Election Commission is overburdened with the holding of state and Lok Sabha elections. Under the given structure, the Election Commission cannot possibly stretch out any further," he adds. The CPI(M) has decided to oppose the Bill "lock, stock and barrel", because it is of the view that the implementation of the Bill's provisions will erode the powers of the states.

The state governments are also threatened by the fact that the powers of Governors will be substantially strengthened under the new legislation. "Our fears have come true," says Gurupadaswamy. "The new powers of the Governor can be used to destabilise and dismiss state governments."

Brushing aside such objections, Congress(I) MPs staunchly support the Bill and accuse the Opposition of having done an about-turn on its earlier stand: democracy at the grassroots level. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam of the Congress(I) points out that as early as October 1983, the Opposition met in Srinagar and passed a resolution that a constitutional amendment was necessary to implement Article 40, to devolve power to village *panchayats*. "Why have the Opposition members changed their stand now?" asks the ruling party MP.

Opposition leaders, however, stress that it is not the devolution of powers they are opposed to, but the fact that the powers of the states will be substantially undermined.

The fact that something needs to be done to improve the working of urban local bodies is indisputable. What remains to be seen is whether the steps outlined in the Nagarpalika Bill can remedy the malaise.

Shiraz Siddiqui/New Delhi



Rajiv Gandhi: Is the Nagarpalika Bill an election gimmick?

The Opposition feels that the Nagarpalika Bill will erode the authority of state governments. Instead of devolving powers, it will lead to greater centralisation

state governments often mete out step-motherly treatment to their urban bodies; financial self-sufficiency may help municipalities establish their autonomy. Even the Opposition concedes that this is a good thing. However, says K.P. Unnikrishnan of the Congress(S), "If Rajiv's government was so keen to strengthen the finances and revenues of urban

The key to heredity

DNA fingerprinting is the latest method to unravel the mystery of a man's lineage and identity

Last June, when Justice T.S. Arunachalam of the Madras High Court accepted the verdict of P. Chandra Sekharan, director of the Tamil Nadu forensic sciences department, on a long drawn out paternity case, little did he anticipate that he might spark off a row among scientists—not the contending parents alone. The case involved a five-year-old girl, Mary, and her parents, K. Perumal and Kaliaammal, who live by performing acrobatics in the Pallavaram area of suburban Madras. Another couple in the neighbourhood, Rama Pandian and Kannaammal, whose child had disappeared nearly a year ago, was convinced that Mary was none other than their kidnapped daughter, Lakshmi. Lakshmi was also a five-year-old and looked a lot like Mary. The much-publicised case dragged on for weeks, until Justice Arunachalam was 'armed' with ace forensic scientist Sekharan's evidence that the 'second' parents, Pandian and Kannaammal, had no claim.

It wasn't really an open-and-shut investigation, for Mary's genetic traits, when examined, had a remarkable degree of ambivalence. The aspirant parents were finally excluded by 11 tests carried out by Sekharan's men (against a possible 19). However, these still did not answer the question: who are Mary's parents? Well, Pandian and Kannaammal are certainly not her parents, but the tests do not confirm that Perumal and Kaliaammal are Mary's parents either.

Traditional forensic methods, using genetic systems, cannot precisely identify the father of a child. And that is the bone of contention between Sekharan's department and the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cell and Molecular Biology (CCMB), a central government-run institute. Pushp Bhargava, the institute's director, launched an investigation into the case even as Sekharan was struggling with his tests. Bhargava claims that the CCMB, using DNA fingerprinting, established that Perumal and Kaliaammal are the real parents of Mary. This claim sparked off a new controversy. Should the courts accept the

'exclusion' method, as used by Sekharan and his team of investigators at the forensic science department in Madras? Or, should 'inclusion'—the ability to pinpoint real parents—be the only method accepted by law?

The answer is not just important to suspicious husbands and divorced wives fighting for the custody of their children, who besiege forensic laboratories with requests to identify a child's 'true' father. The entire scientific community has been looking for the tell-tale marks of birth and lineage in the genes, the tiny packets of information stored in each cell of the human body. Sekharan's genetic marker tests are a way of eliminating 'non-fathers', whose genes don't carry the 'signature marks' on that of their children's. But these signatures are not unique—there is always the chance of an unrelated person carrying a child's 'signature' on his genes. Bhargava, on the other hand, believes that paternity should be established by deeper signature marks, patterns that run through the infinitesimally small building blocks of the gene. This method, known as DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) fingerprint-

ing, can help spot parents with incredible accuracy. It might go wrong, however, if either of the parents has a genetically identical twin. But the chance of this is one in 30 billion—not much of a chance, considering that five billion human beings inhabit the earth at present.

The 'Mary case', however, is a landmark in Indian forensic investigation. The baffling ambivalence of Mary's genetic traits arose because many of her genetic markers, such as blood group antigens, serum proteins and red cell enzymes, could have been derived from either couple. These genetic markers are sign-posts to help identify specific genes. The nucleus in each human cell has 23 pairs of chromosomes. A specific gene or a group of related genes—alleles, as they are called—determine a particular characteristic, say the blood group. These alleles, as postulated by Mendel's law, are traceable to the parents' corresponding alleles. Also,

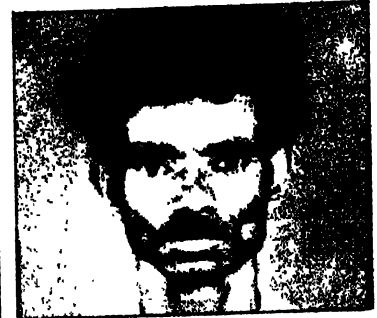


when the inherited characteristics are contradictory (tall father, short mother), the 'dominant' allele (tallness) overshadows the 'recessive' allele in the child.

Mary was first tested for red cell antigens—A, B, AB and O. A person's blood group depends on which of three gene alleles—A, B, and O—he inherits. Mary, whose blood group is AB, could be the product of a marriage between a person of blood group A and one of group B. Mary's real father Perumal has group B blood, while mother Kaliammal has group A. But Pandian, who claimed to be her father, belongs to the AB group, while his wife Kannaammal has A group blood. The children of a marriage between AB and A groups, according to Mendelian principles, can have blood of either group A or AB. So the blood group test did not rule out either couple from being Mary's true parents.

Though blood groups can categorise the human species into only four distinct groups, or phenotypes, the well-known Rh-antigen factor, written with the six genes—C,c, D,d, E,e—produces 64 phenotypes. Mary has a CcDDee antigen, which could have been inherited from either set of parents. Yet another test, involving the antigens M, N, S and s (found on the second of the 23 chromosome pairs) also failed in Mary's case. She has MNSs, as do both her real parents. But the other couple has MNss

The Mary case is a landmark in the history of Indian forensic investigation. It sparked off the debate on whether the courts should accept traditional methods to establish a person's parentage? Or should only DNA fingerprinting be trusted?



Five-year-old Mary's parents, Perumal and Kaliammal of Madras, were dragged into a court case when another couple claimed that they were her 'real' parents. However, forensic tests disproved their claims

and MNSs, thus they too can produce an MNSs child.

After ten such tests which failed to eliminate either of the couples, the Human Leucocyte Antigen (HLA) test, based on the inheritance pattern of an antigen found in the white blood cells, finally established something definite. The HLA factor has four defined loci, each with multiple alleles—locus A: 20 alleles; locus B: 40; locus Cw (synonymous with the third focus): about 10; and locus DR (synonymous with the fourth locus): 10. Fixed on the sixth pair of chromosomes, the HLA genes are embedded along two lines, on haplotypes, one derived from the mother and the other from the father. Each of the child's haplotypes must be identical to either of the parent's.

With such a large variety of alleles on each locus, the HLA test, theoretically, can produce any number of phenoty-

pes—300 million, according to the law of permutation. One of Mary's two HLA haplotypes, mapped at Sekharan's laboratory, read exactly like one of Perumal's; while the other haplotype was a xerox copy of one of Kaliammal's. Conversely, neither of her haplotypes resembled those of the other couple. This ruled out Pandian and Kannaammal from being her parents.

But the HLA genes have complex arrangements, caused by multiple alleles. It is possible for a child to have a haplotype bearing, say, the allel-signature of A2 B5 CW1 DR3 in common with two or more men—any one of them could be the father. This underscores Bhargava's charge that Sekharan's 'exclusion' method might reject most false claims to parenthood, but does not guarantee absolute accuracy. Bhargava says that even if all the 19 approved genetic marker tests are conducted, the chance of correct exclusion is 99.7 per cent. Thus, there is the none-too-small and dangerous possibility of three out of 1,000 wrongfully being denied claims of parenthood.

DNA fingerprinting, on the other hand, is a state of the art technique of identifying individuals and their parents from the repetition of certain 'phrases' in the genetic code. The DNA,



Sekharan (left) feels that "exclusion methods are enough for paternity tests", but Bhargava believes that a more accurate method is required. While Sekharan's genetic marker tests are a way of eliminating non-fathers. Bhargava points out that DNA fingerprinting can help spot parents with incredible accuracy

which is the key to heredity, creates the chain of genes and resembles a double-railed spiral staircase. This staircase, or double-helix, has rungs, each of which is called a base pair as it is made of two out of four complementary chemicals: adenine(A), thymine(T), cytosine(C), or guanine (G). A latches on only to T, and C seeks G. Each of these four bases is a 'letter' in the genetic alphabet. The 'letters', arranged along either of the rails of the staircase and moving in triplets (ATC or CGA or TAG), form the 'words'. The 'words' join up in sequence to form 'sentences' of gene; each of which can order the production of a specific protein.

DNA fingerprints are the patterns in which certain phrases (say, ATCCGA) recur on a genetic code. The pattern is unique to an individual; besides, it follows the Mendelian laws of inheritance. Five years ago, Alec Jeffreys of the University of Leicester, UK, began recording DNA fingerprints by isolating the DNA from the tissue, chopping its long chain into shorter pieces by using chemical knives, and then recording with a probe (a synthetic monitor which sniffs the required 'phrase') the unique pattern. Jeffreys' probe has been widely put to commercial use, costing around US \$4,000 per person for a complete DNA fingerprint.

But Bhargava claims that Lalji Singh, the CCMB's 42-year-old geneticist, has developed an improved 'Bkm probe', which is "better than Jeffreys' in many ways". Singh's probe was used at the CCMB to prove that Perumal and

Kaliammal are Mary's biological parents, while the other couple is unrelated to her. The CCMB naturally wants to extract the maximum mileage from the experiment: the Union Cabinet is about to okay its proposal to set up, on a turn-key basis, a Rs 8.6-crore national Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics.

Sekharan, who is one of the country's leading forensic scientists (his basic research is on the individuality of sutures, or joining marks, in the human skull), is nevertheless somewhat sceptical of Bhargava's claims. "Exclusion methods are enough for paternity tests; besides, the last word on DNA fingerprinting has yet to be spoken," he says. In fact, he is giving vent to a general fear that DNA fingerprints are not infallible as evidence unless the probe, which is sniffing a set pattern, is itself validated by checking out that the pattern is neither too rare nor too frequent in the subject's population group.

DNA fingerprinting is a state of the art technique of identifying individuals and their parents from the repetition of certain 'phrases' in the genetic code. The pattern in which the phrases recur is unique to an individual

The influential science journal, *Nature*, reported that Lifecode Corporation, a well-known genetic company in the US, recently examined DNA repeat-patterns in more than 100 paternity cases, and found an exclusion probability similar to HLA, that is 94 per cent—disappointingly low. The American Association of Blood Banks' committee on parentage testing has, in fact, recommended that every DNA probe used for that purpose must first be put through extensive family and population testing. DNA fingerprints have often gone haywire in the West because of contamination, wrong matching and blurred interpretation.

Jeffrey will visit Madras next month to attend the Indo-Pacific Conference on Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, to be chaired by Sekharan. Geneticists expect the conference to be the forum for some hot debate on DNA fingerprinting vis-à-vis blood group tests and such other older procedures.

But DNA fingerprinting is only the first step in Bhargava's ambitious plans for the CCMB. He wants to begin a genome sequencing project on the pattern of the US National Institute of Health (NIH) and has already written to the Prime Minister about it. The project will cost the NIH a staggering US \$3 billion in the next 15 years, the soonest that it can complete the job. The human genome is the complete set of instructions for making a human being. These instructions are tucked into the nucleus of each of the human body's 100 trillion cells and shape everything that a human being does, experiences, enjoys and suffers from.

For Bhargava, the forensic use of DNA fingerprinting is necessary and inevitable. "I can safely predict that by the year 2010, having such a fingerprint will become a statutory requirement, like having a birth certificate." But the highly labour-intensive genome sequencing project, which may not cost more than Rs 350 crores in India, is a foray to the outermost boundaries of science. It is relatively easy to trace a man's lineage or identity. But to try and read a complete genetic blueprint is still in the realm of sci-fi, even in the West. Of the estimated 1,00,000-odd gene 'sentences', only 1,550 have been read so far. Only 1,550 genes have been roughly located on various chromosomes.

And there is still so much to read! The three billion bases, or 'letters', contained in each cell, pack in as much information as in all the issues of SUNDAY for 165 years, 8,580 weeks.

Sumit Mitra/Madras

Another Ambani triumph

The CBI takes over the murder case and Kirti walks free

Businessmen who oppose Dhirubhai Ambani have come to simple conclusions: throw stones at him and he will use them to build himself a wall; fling mud instead and he will turn it into a mud pack. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the manner in which the Ambanis have wriggled out of their current troubles.

When the Bombay police arrested Kirti Ambani, Reliance's public relations manager, and Arjun Babaria, an underworld fixer, and charged them with plotting to murder Bombay Dyeing's Nusli Wadia, it seemed as though nemesis had finally caught up with the Ambanis. After the arrests made Doordarshan's national news bulletin, it was rumoured that Ambani was losing his celebrated grip on the Rajiv government and when Sharad Pawar held off transferring the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), it appeared that this was one mess that Dhirubhai Ambani

was not going to get cleared up for him.

No way. It took 48 hours longer than usual, but the gigantic Reliance machine swung into action and squashed the case. Pawar announced that he would, after all, transfer the case to the CBI. Mohan Katre, the bureau's obliging director, arrived in Bombay to take charge. Doordarshan carried no other anti-Ambani stories and on Friday, 11 August, a smiling Kirti Ambani sauntered out of court, freed on bail set at Rs 25,000.

Technically, of course, the investigation was still on and Katre would do his best to unearth the plot (just as his

organisation has nabbed the Bofors culprits—see 'Profile', elsewhere in this issue). But everybody knew that the case was dead. The Bombay police who regard Katre and his obliging bureau with utter contempt seemed convinced that the CBI would scupper the investigation. "We've given Katre a healthy baby," mourned a top officer. "He will probably let it starve to death." Given the CBI's past record, it was more probable that the agency would throttle it.

And the Wadia camp, which had won the first round, conceded that the bout had been awarded to Ambani—but it insisted, only because of a crooked referee.

It took 48 hours longer than usual, but the gigantic Reliance machine swung into action and squashed the case. Pawar announced that he would transfer the case to the CBI, Doordarshan carried no other anti-Ambani stories and Kirti Ambani was freed on bail

For four days, however, the battle see-sawed. On Monday, 7 August, Ram Jethmalani went to the High Court and obtained a stay order restraining the CBI from taking over the case on the grounds that Katre had a financial stake in Reliance. Unfortunately for the Wadia camp, Kirti Ambani and Arjun Babaria had already been handed over to the CBI's custody and so all the stay order meant was that the CBI was prevented from getting hold of the case diaries.

Two days later, on Wednesday, 9 August, the situation turned bizarre. Professor R.K. Amin, a member of the BJP's national executive, filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court asking for the case to be transferred to the CBI. The Supreme Court granted this request, effectively vacating the Bombay High Court's stay order.

That was in the morning. By the afternoon, Ram Jethmalani, who had been told about the decision while he was in the Rajya Sabha, had stormed into the court and denounced Amin's petition as a "fraud on the court". He claimed that Amin had failed to correctly apprise the court of the case pending before the Bombay High Court and had tricked it into passing its order. The Supreme Court, he said, had needlessly interfered in a matter that was before the High Court.

Dhirubhai Ambani:
the black magic
still works

Seeing Jethmalani's agitation, Justices Dutt and Pandian conceded that they were not aware that the Bombay High Court order had been passed with the consent of all parties and asked Amin's lawyer to appear in court again. After he had offered new arguments, the Supreme Court stayed all investigations, whether by the Bombay police or the CBI.

The next day, the action returned to the Bombay High Court which was told about the Supreme Court's decision. The High Court now took the line that as the Supreme Court had got involved, it would not be proper for it to go any further into the case. It asked the CBI and the Bombay police to give reasons for not giving Kirti Ambani and Babaria bail when they appeared before the magistrate on Friday.

The CBI did make a weak submission to this effect, but by the time the magistrate heard the remand application, there was virtually no doubt which way he would rule. The only surprising aspect was that he set bail as low as Rs 25,000. And so, after 12 days in custody, Kirti Ambani was free again.

And even the Wadia camp conceded that the Supreme Court would probably rule that the CBI was perfectly entitled

Ambani-bashers feel that Reliance is no longer the favourite of Race Course Road. Of course, they are unable to explain why the government has agreed to back the Ambanis by letting the obliging Katre handle the case

to investigate the crime. Once that happened, then Jethmalani's rear-guard action would have failed completely.

But had the Ambanis won a total victory after the initial reverses? The general opinion was that they had taken a severe beating in public relations terms. The murder plot remained on the front pages of the newspapers for ten days and nearly every report regarded the Bombay police's version as gospel truth. Most magazines that carried the

story also gave short shrift to the Reliance version that it was the victim of a conspiracy to malign and defame it.

The negative publicity is certain to hurt the Ambanis. Even those who regarded the allegations as too far-fetched to be credible were forced to revise this opinion when *The Times of India*, Bombay, front-paged a story describing how Kirti Ambani wanted to hire members of the Dawood Ibrahim gang for the hit on Wadia. Usually, the Ambanis have been able to attribute motives to all those who attack them but this time, almost the entire mainstream press treated the alleged conspiracy as fact.

To be fair to the Ambanis, this had little to do with any evidence offered to the media. Tradition has it that the Indian press cheerfully reprints every allegation made by the police without bothering to give the accused the benefit of the doubt. The Ambanis have benefited from this media naivete when it is the CBI that is doing the briefing; now the tables were turned.

And while Reliance has always claimed to be unaffected by negative

Nusli Wadia: claiming foul play



Dial S for Murder

How supari killings are organised in Bombay

On the face of it, there is nothing unusual about Pakmodia Street and Timkar Street—the two alleys bang opposite the J.J. Hospital junction in Bombay's Vorimohalla area. The neat rows of well-furnished shops that line both sides of the streets could easily be mistaken for business offices. But it is here that one could hire killers and establish contact with the underworld. And, *supari* is the code word one has to be familiar with. It is actually an advance deposited for hiring hitmen. The price, of course, depends on the job: it could range from a few thousands to lakhs. In Nusli Wadia's case, the deal was reportedly struck for Rs 50 lakhs.

Take the case of Russi Mehta, a municipal corporator. It was alleged that one Noora, who had a flourishing business in illicit distilleries and brothels, hired a gang which had

press reporting most of what has appeared before has stopped at portraying the Ambanis as adroit manipulators—a characterisation that no businessman in today's India really resents. Murder, however, falls in a different category and there were fears that memories of the plot would linger in the minds of investors.

At Reliance's Nariman Point headquarters, however, the mood was decidedly upbeat. The quasi-official view was that while the publicity would hurt in

the short run, the conspiracy would soon be erased from public memory. Nor would investors be deterred from putting their money into Reliance and Larsen and Toubro because of a few naive crime reporters.

That perception may or may not be accurate, but Reliance's rivals were busy spreading more damaging stories about the Ambanis' relations with the powers that be in New Delhi. Would Sharad Pawar have dared arrest Kirti

Ambani without clearing it with Delhi? If, as Pawar says, he was given the go-ahead by the Prime Minister's Office, then this means that Dhirubhai is no longer in favour.

Moreover, why did the news of the arrests make the national news on Doordarshan? There is no doubt that somebody phoned up the newsroom after the Hindi news bulletin and asked the news editor to make sure that the item made it to the evening news. In today's tightly controlled Doordarshan set-up only somebody from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) or K.K. Tewari himself could have had the clout to do this. Mandi House sources say that the call came from a joint secretary in the PMO (though apparently, not from Mani Shankar Aiyar, as is sometimes believed), which suggests that Rajiv wanted the news on the air.

All of this is quite tenuous but Ambani-bashers use it as evidence to substantiate their claim that Reliance is no longer the favourite of Race Course Road. Of course, they are unable to explain why, in that case, the government has agreed to back the Ambanis by letting the obliging Katre handle the case.

There is some speculation also about the future of Maharashtra chief minister Sharad Pawar. Soon after Kirti Ambani was arrested, Pawar received calls from nearly everybody who mattered in New Delhi. Despite this, he dragged his feet on transferring the case to the CBI. Some political analysts see this as defiance of Delhi's authority and there are rumours to the effect that he may not last long after the general elections.

Meanwhile, questions were being asked about how credible the Bombay police's allegations were. The stories about AK-47 assault rifles and diamond robberies were being denied and no proof was offered for the claim that the Dawood Ibrahim gang had been contacted. The police themselves were disowning some of the stories leaked by officers—but refusing to comment on what evidence they *did* have. The Ambanis were confident that once an impartial organisation got its hands on the case, it would prove that much of what the police had told the press was inaccurate. The problem was that nobody regarded the CBI as impartial.

But then, that was a small problem. For the moment, all that mattered was that Kirti Ambani was free and the affair off the front pages. Dhirubhai Ambani had worked his very own brand of black magic again.

Vir Sanghvi



Jethmalani: 'Supreme Court was tricked'



Sharad Pawar: defied Delhi

come from Rajasthan to finish off Mehta. One day, while Mehta was on his way back home from office, the gang gunned down the corporator. Noora, it was believed, paid the killers Rs two lakhs for the job. Earlier too, Noora had hired another bunch of criminals to bump off one of his business rivals.

But killings are not the only crime that hitmen are asked to do. In 1987, a rich iron and steel merchant, Haren Gosalia, was kidnapped from the doorsteps of his flat in Jain Society near Sion. And the ransom that the kidnappers asked for was Rs 25 lakhs. Though the plans were foiled by the police, it was revealed that one of Gosalia's distant relatives had hired a gang to do the job for him.

A very tragic case involved a Birla executive who had come from Calcutta and checked in at a posh hotel in Juhu. He, coincidentally, had the same name as the target of a dreaded

Bombay gang led by Samad Khan, the nephew of Karim Lala, the underworld don. But the target apparently changed his plans at the last moment. The killers mistook the Birla officer for their target and killed him.

The Bombay police admit that *supari* killings are on the rise. The reason, according to them, is: business rivalry has increased and there is a lot of black money floating around in Bombay. Moreover, most people do not like to go through a long-drawn legal battle and prefer to settle scores the fast way.

The alleged conspiracy to murder Bombay Dyeing's Nusli Wadia has proved that even big-time businessmen do not hesitate to stoop so low. As a retired police official said: "It is indeed startling. Previously businessmen used to hire people to help them to recover money. But the situation is quite different today."

Olga Telle/Bombay

Tales of British tolerance

Hanif Kureishi on the plight of blacks in Britain

In Pakistan, England just wouldn't go away. Relics of the Raj were everywhere: buildings, monuments, Oxford accents, libraries full of English books, and newspapers. Many Pakistanis had relatives in England; thousands of Pakistani families depended on money sent from England. Visiting a village, a man told me through an interpreter, that when his three grandchildren visited from Bradford, he had to hire an interpreter to speak to them. It was happening all the time—the closeness of the two societies, and the distance.

Although Pakistanis still wanted to escape to England, the old men in their clubs and the

young eating their hamburgers took great pleasure in England's decline and decay. The great master was fallen. Now it was seen as strikebound, drug-ridden, riot-torn, inefficient disunited, a society which has moved too suddenly from puritanism to hedonism and now loathed itself. And the Karachi wits liked to ask me when I thought the Americans would decide the British were ready for self-government.

Yet there were others who still clung to what they called British ideals, maintaining that it is a society's ideals, its conception of human progress, that define the level of its civilisation. They regretted, under the Islamisation, the repudiation of the values which they said were the only positive aspect of Britain's legacy to the subcontinent. These were: the idea of secular institutions based on reason, not revelation or scrip-

(Left) Hanif Kureishi; and, police hold back black demonstrators in London: fighting for rights



ture; the idea that there were no final solutions to human problems; and the idea that the health and vigour of a society were bound up with its ability to tolerate and express a plurality of views on all issues, and that these views would be welcomed.

But England as it is today, the ubiquity of racism and the suffering of Pakistanis because of it, was another, stranger subject. When I talked about it, the response was unexpected. Those who had been to England often told of being insulted, or beaten up, or harassed at the airport. But even these people had attitudes similar to those who hadn't been there.

It was that the English misunderstood the Pakistanis because they saw only the poor people, those from the villages, the illiterates, the peasants, the Pakistanis who didn't know how to use toilets, how to eat with knives and forks because they were poor. If the British could only see them, the rich, the educated, the sophisticated, they wouldn't be so hostile. They'd know what civilised people the Pakistanis really were. And then they'd like them.

The implication was that the poor who had emigrated to the West to escape the strangu-

Visiting a village in Pakistan, an old man told me that when his three grandchildren visited from Bradford, he had to hire an interpreter to speak to them

tion of the rich in Pakistan deserved the racism they received in Britain because they really were contemptible. The Pakistani middle class shares the disdain of the British for the emigre working class and peasantry of Pakistan.

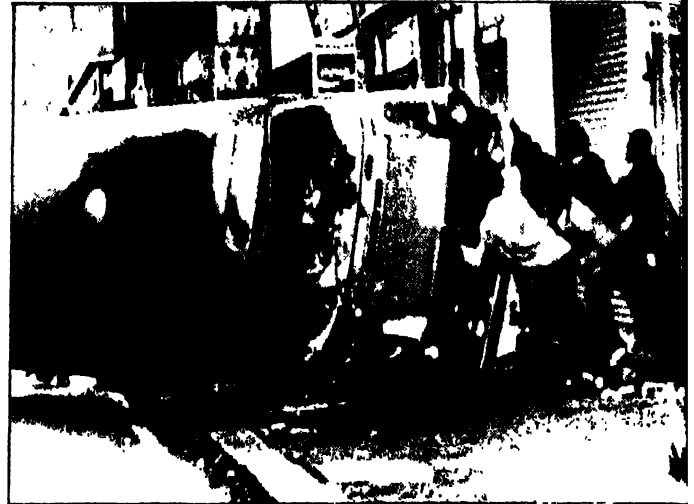
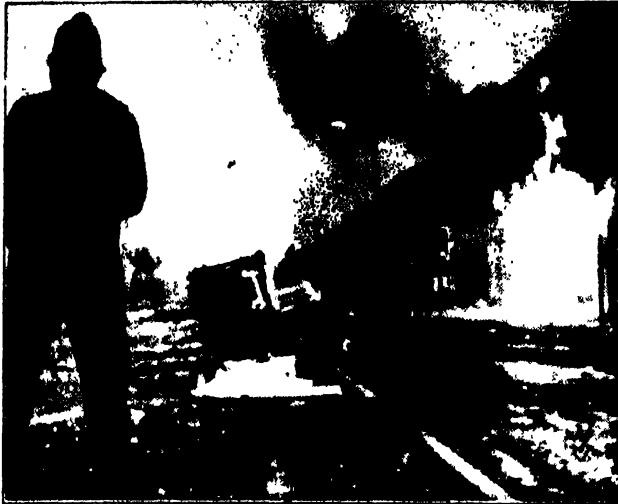
It was interesting to see that the British working class (and not only the working class, of course) used the same vocabulary of contempt about Pakistanis—the charges of ignorance, laziness, fecklessness, uncleanness—that their own British middle class used about them. And they weren't able to see any similarity.



A street scene in Karachi: home, sweet home

Racism goes hand in hand with class inequality. Among other things, racism is a kind of snobbery, a desire to see oneself as superior culturally and economically, and a desire actively to experience and enjoy that superiority by hostility or violence. And when that superiority of class and culture is unsure or not acknowledged by the other—as it would be acknowledged by the servant and master in class-stable Pakistan—but is in doubt, as with the British working class and Pakistanis in England, then it has to be demonstrated physically.

Some of the middle class of Pakistan, who also used the familiar vocabulary of contempt about their own poor (and, incidentally, about the British poor) couldn't understand when I explained that British racists weren't discriminating in their racial discrimination: they loathed all Pakistanis and kicked whoever was nearest. To the English all Pakistanis were the same; racists didn't ask whether you had a chauffeur, TV and private education before they set fire to your



(From left) Houses and property destroyed during race riots in Britain: not a tolerant society

house. But for some Pakistanis, it was their own poor who had brought this upon them.

Coming back to England was harder than going. I had culture shock in reverse. Images of plenty yelled at me. England seemed to be overflowing with...things. Things from all over the world. Things and information. Information, though, which couldn't bite through the profound insularity and indifference.

In Pakistan people were keen to know: not only about Asia and the Middle East, but about Europe and the United States. They sought out information about the whole world. They needed it. They ordered books from Europe, listened to international radio and chewed up visiting academics like pieces of orange.

In Britain today, among the middle class, thinking and argument are almost entirely taboo. The other taboo, replacing death in its unacceptability, is money. As our society has become more divided, the acknowledgment of that division—which is a financial division, a matter of economic power—is out of the question. So money is not discussed. It is taken for granted that you have it: that you have means of obtaining it; that you are reasonably well off and gain status over others because of it.

Accompanying this financial silence, and shoring up both the social division and the taboo, is the prohibition on thought. The discussion of a serious subject to a conclusion using logic, evidence and counter-evidence is an unacceptable social embarrassment. It just isn't done to argue: it is thought to be the same as rowing. One has opinions in England, but they are formed in private and clung to in public despite everything, despite their often being quite wrong.

In Pakistan it was essential to have knowledge because political discussion was serious. It mattered what you thought. People put chairs in a circle, sat down and talked. Intellectual dignity was maintained, earnest anxiety was expressed; you weren't alone; ideas and feelings were shared. These things had to be said, even in low

voices, because absolute silence was intolerable, absolute silence was the acceptance of isolation and division.

I will never forget the hospitality, warmth and generosity of the people of Pakistan; the flowers on the lawn of the Sind Club, the sprawling open houses, full of air and people and the smell of spices; the unbelievable brightness of the light shining through a dust haze; the woman walking, perfectly straight-backed along a street with an iron balanced on her head; the open-air typists outside the law courts; butterflies as big as clock faces; the man who slept with a chicken in his bed; my uncle's library, bought in the 1940s in Cambridge, where he was taught by Russell—though when I opened the books after being given the library, they were rotten with worms. And the way the men shake hands. This is worth going into.

First you offer them your hand and they grasp it. The clasped hands are slapped then with their spare hand as an affirmation of initial contact.

Racism is a kind of snobbery, a desire to see oneself as superior culturally and economically, and enjoy that superiority by hostility or violence





This is, as it were, the soup. Now they pull you to them for the main course, the full embrace, the steak. As you look over their shoulder, your bodies thrust together, your heat intermingled, they crack you on the back at least three times with their open palm. These are not negligible taps, but good healthy whacks, demonstrating equality and openness. Depending on the nature of the friendship, these whacks could go on a considerable time and may debilitate the sick or weak. But they must be reciprocated. This done, they will let you move away from them, but still holding your right hand. You are considered fully, the affection overbrimming, as they regard all of you, as they seem to take in your entire being from top to toe, from inside to out. At last, after complete contact has been made, all possibility of concealment or inhibition banished, they carefully let go of your hand as if it were a delicate object. That is a greeting.

And there was the photograph of my father in my uncle's room, in which he must have been

about the same age as me. A picture in a house that contained fragments of my past: a house full of stories, of Bombay, Delhi, China; of feuds, wrestling matches, adulteries, windows broken with hands, card games, impossible loves, and magic spells. Stories to help me see my place in the world and give me a sense of the past which could go into making a life in the present and future. This was surely part of the way I could understand myself. This knowledge, garnered in my mid-twenties, would help me form an image of myself: I'd take it back to England where I needed it to protect myself.

When I considered staying in Pakistan to regain more of my past and complete myself with it, I had to think that that was impossible. Didn't I already miss too much of England? And wasn't I too impatient with the illiberalism and lack of possibility of Pakistan?

So there was always going to be the necessary return to England. I came home...to my country.

This is difficult to say. "My country" isn't a notion that comes easily. It is still difficult to answer the question, where do you come from? I have never wanted to identify with England. When Enoch Powell spoke for England, I turned away in final disgust. I would rather walk naked down the street than stand up for the national anthem. The pain of that period of my life, in the mid-1960s, is with me still. And when I originally wrote this piece I put it in the third person. Hanif saw this, Hanif felt that, because of the difficulty of directly addressing myself to what I felt then, of not wanting to think about it again. And perhaps that is why I took to writing in the first place, to make strong feelings into weak feelings. But despite all this, some kind of identification with England remains.

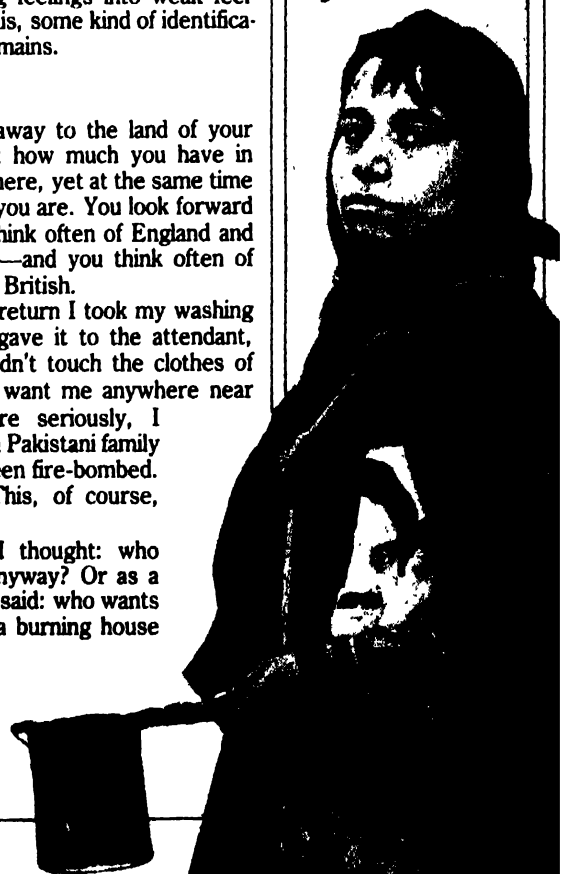
It is strange to go away to the land of your ancestors, to find out how much you have in common with people there, yet at the same time to realise how British you are. You look forward to getting back; you think often of England and what it means to you—and you think often of what it means to be British.

Two days after my return I took my washing to a launderette and gave it to the attendant, only to be told she didn't touch the clothes of foreigners: she didn't want me anywhere near her launderette. More seriously, I read in the paper that a Pakistani family in the East End had been fire-bombed. A child was killed. This, of course, happens frequently.

I was in a rage. I thought: who wants to be British anyway? Or as a black American writer said: who wants to be integrated into a burning house anyway?

Begging in Pakistan:
hated by the rich;
(left) policemen grapple
with blacks in Britain:
for a better deal

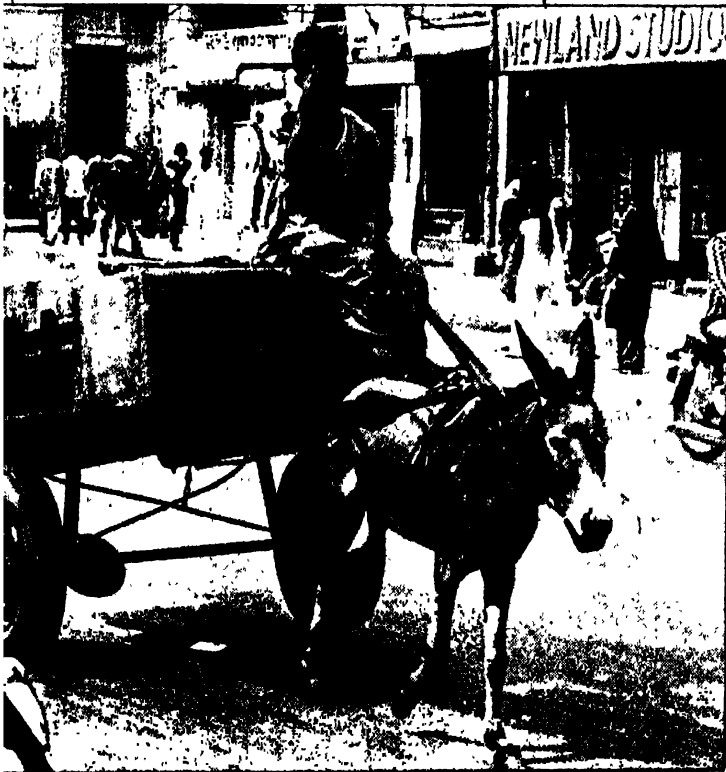
**British racists
loathed all
Pakistanis.
They didn't
ask whether
you had a
chauffeur, TV
and private
education
before they
set fire to
your house**



And indeed I know Pakistanis and Indians born and brought up here who consider their position to be the result of a diaspora: they are in exile, awaiting return to a better place, where they belong. And there this "belonging" will be total. This will be home, and peace.

It is not difficult to see how much illusion and falsity there is in this view. How much disappointment might be involved in going "home" only to see the extent to which you have been formed by England and the depth of attachment you feel to the place, despite everything.

It isn't surprising that some people believe in this idea of "home". The alternative to believing it is more conflict here: it is more self-hatred; it is the continual struggle against racism; it is the continual adjustment to life in Britain. And blacks in Britain know they have made enough adjustments.



The middle class in Pakistan look down upon their poor

So what is it to be British?

In his 1941 essay *England Your England* Orwell says: "The gentleness of the English civilisation is perhaps its most marked characteristic." He calls the country "a family with the wrong members in control" and talks of the "soundness and homogeneity of England".

Elsewhere he considers the Indian character. He explains the "maniacal suspiciousness" which, agreeing, he claims, with E.M. Forster in *A Passage to India*, he calls "the besetting Indian vice". But he has the grace to acknowledge in his essay *Not Counting Niggers* "that the overwhelming bulk of the British proletariat (lives)...in Asia and Africa".

But this is niggardly. The main object of his praise is British "tolerance" and he writes of

**Tolerant,
gentle British
whites have
no idea of the
violence,
hostility and
contempt
directed
against black
people every
day by state
and individual**

"their gentle manners". He also says that this aspect of England "is continuous, it stretches into the future and the past, there is something in it that persists".

But does it persist? If this version of England was true then, in the 1930s and 1940s, it is under pressure now. From the point of view of thousands of black people it just does not apply.

Obviously tolerance in a stable, confident wartime society with a massive Empire is quite different to tolerance in a disintegrating uncertain society during an economic depression. But surely this would be the test; this would be just the time for this much-advertised tolerance in the British soul to manifest itself as more than vanity and self-congratulation. But it has not. Under real continuous strain it has failed.

Tolerant, gentle British whites have no idea how little of this tolerance is experienced by blacks here. No idea of the violence, hostility and contempt directed against black people every day by state and individual. If any real contemporary content is to be given to Orwell's blind social patriotism, then clichés about "tolerance" must be seriously examined for depth and weight of substantial content.

In the meantime it must be made clear that blacks don't require "tolerance" in this particular condescending way. It isn't this particular paternal tyranny that is wanted, since it is major adjustments to British society that have to be made. I stress that it is the British who have to make these adjustments.

It is the British, the white British, who have to learn that being British isn't what it was. Now it is a more complex thing, involving new elements. So there must be a fresh way of seeing Britain and the choices it faces. Much thought, discussion and self-examination must go into what this "new way of being British" involves and how difficult it might be to attain.

The failure to grasp this opportunity for a revitalised and broader self-definition in the face of a real failure to be human, will be more insularity, schism, bitterness and catastrophe.

Britain and Pakistan, have been part of each other for years, usually to the advantage of Britain. They cannot now be wrenched apart, even if that were desirable. Their futures will be intermixed. What that intermix means, its moral quality, whether it is violently resisted by ignorant whites and characterised by inequality and injustice, or understood, accepted and humanised, is for all of us to decide.

This decision is not one about a small group of irrelevant people who can be contemptuously described as "minorities." It is about the direction of British society. About its values and how human it can be when experiencing real difficulty and possible breakdown. It is about the respect it accords individuals, the power it gives to groups, and what it means when it describes itself as "democratic". The future is in our hands. ■

A web of intrigue

Unanswered questions on the conspiracy to murder Nusli Wadia

The plot to kill Nusli Wadia, the Bombay Dyeing chairman, reportedly by Kirti Ambani, a general manager of rival concern Reliance, has all the trappings of a crime thriller. The web of intrigue and chicanery that has been spun around this murky episode has sent ripples through industrial and political circles.

But the circumstances under which Kirti Ambani was arrested on 1 August are revealing. The arrest took place on the same day that the case concerning Nusli Wadia's visa came up for hearing. While a confidant of Wadia, Jamnadas Moorjani, a Bombay Dyeing stockbroker, was ringing up journalists in Bombay telling them that Kirti Ambani would be remanded to police custody till Tuesday next, Wadia himself came up with a statement that he had no inkling of it till 5 pm. The hearing was scheduled to be held at 3 pm, while Moorjani was making the phone calls around 12.30 pm. Before these calls were made, there was a closed-door meeting which was attended by press baron Ramnath Goenka, his adviser Gurumurthy, Javakiraman (Gurumurthy's aide), Thyagarajan, Jamnadas Moorjani, P.R. Vakil (a leading Bombay lawyer), and Nusli Wadia.

It was soon after this meeting that Vakil drove straight to the courts to represent Bombay Police against Kirti Ambani. Incidentally, Vakil had also appeared for S. Gurumurthy and Nusli Wadia before the Thakkar-Natarajan Commission in the Fairfax case.

The next day, the chief minister of Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar, in an official note, requested Delhi that the case be transferred to the CBI. Pawar's move startled the Wadia camp because it was convinced that he would back Wadia to the hilt. The CM's friendship with Wadia is quite well known. Pawar, however, got what he wanted from Kirti Ambani's arrest. On the one hand, he showed his loyalty to the textile baron; and, on the other, he sent signals to Delhi that it was not easy to touch him. He also managed to overcome the pressure he was under on account of the urban land scandals.

The Ramnath Goenka camp wanted to delay the transfer of the case from the Bombay Police to the CBI and used all sorts of dilatory tactics. They contacted the underworld to give statements against Kirti Ambani. Only two persons agreed to do so. One was Shanu, alias Sequera, who made a statement that he was contacted by Prince Babaria and was paid Rs 3.50 lakhs at Palmgrove Hotel. "But on second thoughts I returned the amount," he said. A motor mechanic was supposed to drive the car in which

Sequera was to travel.

On the morning of 4 August, Bombay Police received a call from the CBI that the case be transferred to them. But they refused to do so. In the meanwhile, four staffers of Ritz hotel, which is used to house guests of Reliance, identified Kirti Ambani. Incidentally, no one recognised Babaria. Despite repeated pleas from the



Sharad Pawar: shrewd strategies

CBI, including an order over fax, the Bombay Police refused to transfer the case. It was only after the CBI's joint director, Satish Sahni, flew down to Bombay from Delhi on 6 August that they agreed to hand over the case.

According to sources in Reliance, towards the end of July, K.F. Rustamji, once a top cop of India and now a resident director of Bombay Dyeing, camped in Bombay for ten days. He was assisted by Jal Contractor, a former assistant commissioner of police, Bombay. What were these people doing in the city?

But the most disturbing allegation is the one regarding Mrs Agrawal, the wife of one of the two judges of the two-member bench. It is being claimed that Mrs Agrawal is a junior of Ram Jethmalani. She is a Parsi and was educated at Wadia College. If this is a fact, it is likely to take the wind out of the sails of the case against Kirti Ambani. But two things are clear:

1. P.R. Vakil is on the board of a company called Citurgia Biochemicals Ltd. The vice-chairman of the company: Nusli Wadia.
2. Jal Contractor runs a detective agency called the Federal Protection and Investigation Services. He is a security adviser of Bombay Dyeing. ■

Pawar's move to transfer the case to the CBI startled the Wadia camp because it was convinced that he would back the textile baron to the hilt

More than a super cop

A whitewash machine, perhaps?

Only five years ago, all those who thought that the local police were messing up/scuppering an investigation, resorted to the same solution: send for the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation). It was then believed that regardless of the local police force's integrity/capability, the CBI would book the culprits and ensure that justice was done.

Today, the reverse is true. Last week, Nusli Wadia's friends went to court to prevent the CBI from taking over the investigation into the plot to kill him on the grounds that the bureau would sabotage the enquiry. Similar doubts have been expressed about the CBI's handling of the Syed Modi case, where the agency has been charged with framing Sanjay Singh. R.K. Hegde has alleged that the CBI's sole objective in investigating the Rasheed murder was to bring his government into disrepute. And of course, there can be no doubt that on Bofors, the bureau has done everything possible to shield the guilty.

The subversion of the institutions of government is not a new phenomenon. It began during the Indira Gandhi era. What is extraordinary is that almost till the time that Mrs Gandhi was assassinated, the CBI maintained its reputation for independence and integrity. The rot set in after Rajiv Gandhi took over.

Many police officers and old CBI hands claim that there was always pressure on the bureau to turn into a tool of Congress interests. That it maintained its character was entirely due to a succession of strong-willed CBI directors who withstood this pressure. Unfortunately, they argue, Mohan Katre, the bureau's current director, has cheerfully agreed to turn the agency into Rajiv Gandhi's personal Gestapo—or even, Dhirubhai Ambani's poodle.

FOR THREE years now, Katre's career has been dogged by such allegations and his detractors in the press have regarded his name as a synonym for sleaze. When he got his second, unprecedented extension last year, it was suggested that this was not only a payment for services rendered but also an attempt to ensure that the CBI continued to frame the regime's political opponents.

Katre dismisses such charges. The problem, he says, is that he has investigated many influential people. And they have turned the media against him. Certainly, it is true that no CBI director has been as much at the centre of events as he

has.

The Fairfax scandal was largely his creation. It was Katre who

- gave Rajiv Gandhi the forged Fairfax letter;
- arrested S. Gurumurthy;
- raided Ramnath Goenka;
- leaked the Mulgaokar-Zail Singh letter; and
- hounded and arrested Nusli Wadia.

By some remarkable coincidence, every one of these actions had the effect of boosting Dhirubhai Ambani's interests. This, says Katre shrugging, cannot be helped. He simply did his job.

On Bofors, the saga is slightly more complicated. Asked by the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to find out about the Bofors front companies, Katre actually did quite a good job.

Then suddenly, he did an about-turn. He gave press interviews where, rather in the manner of a performing parrot, he disowned his own conclusions, told lies about his dealings with the Swedish prosecutor and gave clean chits to everybody who had earned a kickback. It was a bizarre performance which suggested that he had either been got at or won over. Since then, he has spent months sabotaging the investigation.

WHY DID Katre do it? On Bofors, he was obviously following orders from the top and was just one more participant in the sordid cover-up initiated by the Rajiv Gandhi government. And perhaps he is simply carrying out his boss' bidding in the Bombay Dyeing-Reliance dispute as well. (Though Ram Jethmalani has claimed in court that his ownership of Reliance shares might have something to do with it.)

But the Nuremberg defence somehow does not behave the head of what was once the country's most respected investigative agency. If a member of the Indian Police Service is asked to launch a cover-up, decency demands that he resign.

Katre does not accept this view. Nor does he agree that he has reduced the CBI's credibility to the extent that it is on par with the Bhagalpur police's. He doesn't even concede that he has wheedled two extensions out of the regime—he says they were forced on him!

In a couple of months, Rajiv will have to decide on a new CBI director. If he chooses to give Katre his third extension, it will probably have the effect of confirming every rumour about this government and its links with bag men and arms-dealers. ■

Old CBI hands claim that the bureau's current director Mohan Katre has cheerfully agreed to turn the agency into Rajiv Gandhi's personal Gestapo

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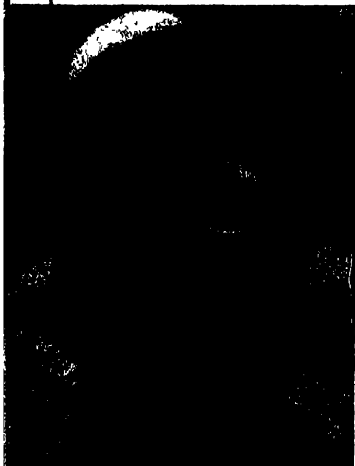


A public sector enterprise with the entrepreneurial spirit.

Sobhraj as a bit player

● It took ten years but Richard Neville and Julie Clark's *The Life And Times Of Charles Sobhraj* has finally made it to the screen—the small screen that is. Last month, a British-Australian mini-series based on the best-selling book premiered on BBC TV to a mixed response.

Most of the criticism centred on the script writers' decision to make Sobhraj a bit player in the saga of Neville and Clark's own relationship. The way



Charles Sobhraj: for Art's sake the series turned out, Clark's hard-headed determination to remain immune to Charlie's charm got the most air-time. Sobhraj, played as a brooding, saturnine Salman Rushdie-type by an ill-at-ease Art Malik, appeared once every 20 minutes or so to give expression to the most ridiculous French-Indian accent between the Seine and the Jamuna.

As the Indian police are the corrupt heavies (the series was filmed in Sri Lanka), no doubt, the Foreign Office will have a thing or two to say about this new spoke in the des-tabalisation wheel.

PAUL S. GORDON

Paul keeps all

● As the press goes into overdrive with stories about the split in the Apeejay group, one man who claims to be blissfully unconcerned is Swraj Paul, the Apeejay brother who sits in London. Firstly, says Paul, his companies do not form part of the Apeejay empire. He owns them personally as a non-resident Indian. His Caparo group also has tea gardens in Assam and these too are not of Apeejay.

Secondly, he adds, it is rubbish to sug-



Swraj Paul: row? What row?

gest that the Paul brothers are rowing and that the feud has led to the split. The only reason why the ownership of the companies has been

clearly delineated is for reasons of inheritance: so the sons of one brother don't get a better deal than the daughters of another.

Dhawan vs a silicon chip

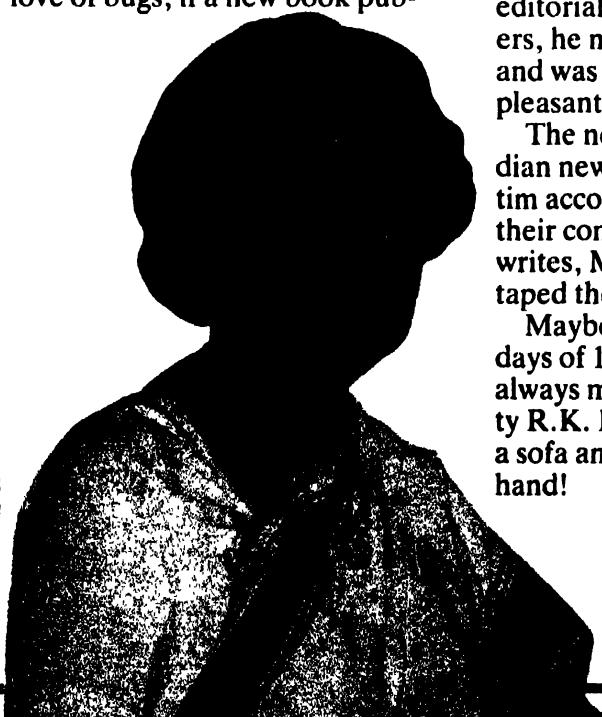
● What did Indira Gandhi and Richard Nixon have in common? A love of bugs, if a new book pub-

lished posthumously by Dennis Hamilton is to be believed.

According to *Editor-In-Chief*, an account of Hamilton's years as editorial boss to Times Newspapers, he met Mrs Gandhi in private and was pushed into saying many pleasant things to her.

The next day, he found that Indian newspapers had carried verbatim accounts of his contributions to their conversation. Obviously, he writes, Mrs Gandhi had secretly taped their talk.

Maybe. But then, in the halcyon days of 1 Safdarjung Road, it was always more probable that the trusty R.K. Dhawan crouched behind a sofa and took it all down in shorthand!



MUKESH PARIJANI

Mrs Gandhi: snug as a bug



Pamella Bordes:
better clothed
than raw

Put your clothes on—quick!

● Pamela Bordes is alive and well and living in London. While most of the British press has now lost interest in her story, the former Pam Singh found a new kind of notoriety last month when *Mayfair*, a downmarket English girlie magazine, car-

ried what it described as "the pictures you thought we would never get—Pamella Bordes nude!"

In fact, the quality of the pictures was poor, and all appeared to have been taken by an ex-lover with an Instamatic in the privacy of his/their bedroom. Moreover, without the benefit of a professional make-

up artist and studio lighting, the lady looked less like the glamorous Ms Bordes of the publicity shots and more like our Pam from Haryana.

But the pictures did prove that all those stories about her investments in expensive lingerie were justified. Obviously, Pamela believed in protecting her assets!



Charm and consideration, Rushdie style

● It wasn't just the Ayatollah Khomeini who relished the thought of smoked Salman. If gossip on the literary circuit is to be believed, then Salman Rushdie's Special Branch bodyguards are beginning to get increasingly infuriated by the man they are supposed to guard.

Apparently, Rushdie, never one of the world's great charmers, finds the intellectual level of his police escort rather below the standard a chap who dines with Harold Pinter and Antonia Fraser is used to.

Accordingly, he has taken to making extremely disparaging remarks about their IQ, much to the annoyance of the guards.

Nevertheless, they had their moment of triumph recently. On his

Rushdie: smoked Salman



way to North London to attend a dinner party, unannounced, Rushdie was mortified when his car stalled suddenly. Worse was that the automobile should have gone dead outside the Regent's Park mosque. And worst of all, that it should have happened just as the faithful were streaming out after evening prayers.

While a panicky Rushdie sweated it out, the Special Branch men tried to get the car moving again. Fortunately, they were successful before anyone recognised the author. And as Rushdie breathed a sigh of relief, they giggled wickedly all the way to the dinner party.

Dubey Darshan

● What, you may well ask, does Suman Dubey, the strait-laced decent, Doon-Cambridge friend of the Prime Minister's do at the information and broadcasting ministry now that he has a hatchet-man for a minister?

Well, judging by his itinerary last month, he expands his horizons. The former editor of the *Indian Express* turned up in London to visit the BBC and find how its television newsroom operates. Next on his list was a trip to New York to find out how the US networks put together their news bulletins.

At the BBC, they liked Dubey but were frankly sceptical. What use were journalistic techniques to a propaganda machine? they wondered. Nevertheless, the adviser to the information ministry ploughed on regard-



Suman Dubey: BBC, here I come

less. And he should soon return to Shastri Bhavan with lots of good tips.

It's a pity though that he didn't teach them a trick or two, Doordarshan style. It would have been interesting to hear Margaret Thatcher described as 'the Pamela Bordes of politics', Neil Kinnock as 'Mephistocles, Lucifer and Judas rolled into one' and David Owen as 'bandit, pure and simple bandit'.

COVER STORY

OYE OYE!



Sunny Deol and Madhuri Dixit: the new generation stars

Move over *Sholay*: *Tridev* is here. For 15 years, the Bombay film industry had regarded the Dharmendra-Amitabh Bachchan 1975 curry-western as the greatest hit in the history of Indian cinema. But on 7 July, when *Tridev* (starring, appropriately enough, Dharmendra's son Sunny Deol) opened, it seemed clear that *Sholay's* record was only too vulnerable.

No sooner had advance booking begun when pandemonium resulted. Mile-long queues of thousands dissolved into chaos when tickets sold out in minutes. At Bombay's Minerva theatre, police

resorted to a *lathi*-charge to disperse an angry mob. At Regal, 300 fans fought the ushers and stormed into the cinema without tickets. (They watched the film standing.)

Throughout the country, the story was the same. Even before *Tridev* had been seen by a single paying customer, the movie-going public had decided that this was going to be the big one. At the end of the sold-out first week, trade pundits gasped when they read the box-office collections: probably the biggest in history. For instance, in the very first week, Bombay's K.T. Vision collected Rs 1,22,144 for *Tridev* against Rs 88,004 for *Mr India* and Rs 1,11,168 for



Sunny Deol: convincing portrayal

Tezaab. Chandan, another theatre hall, recorded sales of Rs 1,06,806 in the first seven days. In the rest of the country, too, *Tridev* ran to packed houses. In Bangalore city, *Tridev* recorded sales of Rs 2,20,000 while in Patna district, it shattered all previous records: counter sales were as high as Rs 4,75,000. In Hyderabad, too, *Tridev* did very well and all the halls of the city did brisk business. Sapna collected Rs 1,23,167, Parmeshwari Rs 1,43,658, Prashant (Secunderabad) Rs 86,286 and Vimal Rs 1,10,077.

The contrast with *Sholay* was striking. Whereas Ramesh Sippy's blockbuster had taken four weeks to establish itself at the box-office, *Tridev* had taken off at once. It had also out-performed all

went on strike, only one thing remained unaffected: *Tridev* still ran to full houses.

For Gulshan Rai, the film's producer, whose other successes include *Johnny Mera Naam*, *Trishul* and *Vidhaata*, a box-office bonanza is something he has come to expect. But even Rai was staggered by *Tridev*'s performance. "In my whole career," he said, "I have never seen advance booking like this. This is our biggest-ever hit."

Rajiv Rai, the film's director and son of the producer, was more modest but still pleased. "I knew it would be a hit but I had no idea that it would smash all these records. I guess we were just lucky."



A still from *Tridev*: shattering box-office records

of Bombay cinema's recent hits. After the video boom, distributors have taken to releasing big films in several cinemas for the first two weeks and then keeping them going at just one theatre. Thus, *Ram Lakhan* completed 30 weeks and *Tezaab* 40 weeks last month—but only at a single cinema.

Tridev, however, just kept going. Distributors, ready to reduce the number of cinemas, were staggered to find that such was the demand that they were actually *short* of cinemas. (Regal, for instance, was only available for a limited run.) And as Bombay reeled under the worst cyclone in living memory and transport operators and taximen

Both Rais concede that much of the film's initial appeal had to do with the craze that has grown around the *Oye oye* song (see box). And to be honest, stripped of the *Oye oye* magic, the sets and the gimmicky action sequences, *Tridev* is just another rehash of a tried and tested formula—the vendetta theme, that runs through *Sholay*, *Ram Lakhan* and countless other Hindi films. Three social outcasts gang up to destroy the forces of evil. There is the honest police officer (Sunny Deol) who, despite his best efforts, finds he cannot fight evil from within the legal framework (which is rotten to the core); the rustic Robin Hood (Naseeruddin Shah), whose faith

In many ways, qua

It has no beginning and no end.

It tends to infinity.

It's never static.

It's never transient.

It's simply timeless.

*And like the universe,
its ever evolving.*

*At SAIL, our universe of 2,38,000
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an intrinsic part of their culture.*

*So that the words "Made in India"
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Quality. A way of thinking.

*Indeed, to create the finest steel,
we don't merely employ
the most modern process.
But also the oldest.*

THE MIND.

We start with quality and end with steel

is like the universe, we live in.



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in the establishment takes a severe bashing when he sees that the law is unable to punish his father's killers; and the neighbourhood *dada* (Jackie Shroff), whose tough-as-nails exterior hides (of course) a heart of gold.

Around these Hindi cinema stereotypes, director Rajiv Rai weaves a tale of wrong-doing, intrigue, love, vengeance, violence and murder. The three heroes—dubbed *Tridev* after the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh—team up against the forces of evil, personified by Bhujang (Amrish Puri), an uncouth dacoit who becomes a

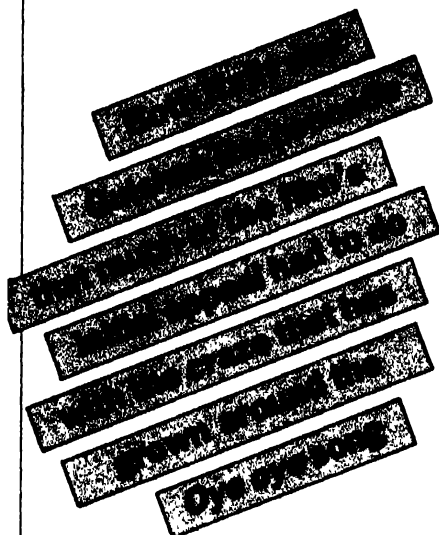
need a lot of money. However, the Rais have never been concerned with making money, but with making a good film." In all, the film cost the producer between Rs 2 and 3 crores. Amrish Puri admits that he was initially sceptical about whether this kind of expenditure would pay off. "I used to wonder about the results," he remembers.

But it certainly paid off. In fact, the lavish sets on which *Tridev* was shot made people want to see it in cinema halls. That old Gulshan Rai axiom—a good film on video serves the purpose of a trailer—held good. Most people who had seen the film on their TV screens saw it a second time in the theatres to get a full feel of it. Says Sunny Deol, "You have to make big films for the big

screen. Otherwise, the people just refuse to come."

Looking at the pattern of recent successes, there was probably never a truer word spoken. Both *Tezaab* and *Ram Lakhan* were conceived and executed on a large scale too. The only small-budget movie to do well in recent times—*Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*—relied on the time-tested formula of the star-crossed lovers to rake it in.

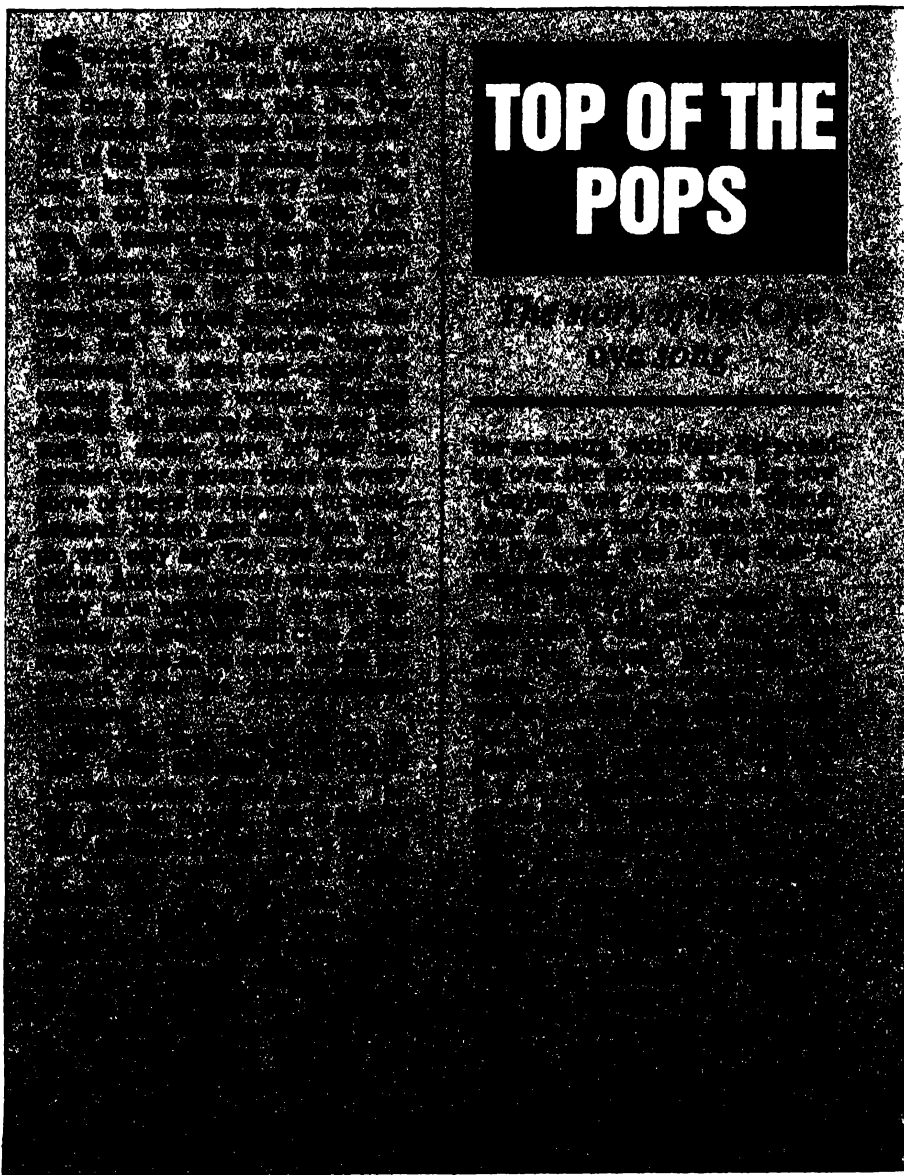
In *Tridev* the villain's hideout became the talking point of the film. The massive set was built at the site of the Paikana Dam in Ooty—right across the breadth of the river. Says art director Bijon Das Gupta about the project, "I wanted to romanticise the villain's den, do something completely new, and it worked.



suave arms dealer. There are the regulation lovelies (Madhuri Dixit, Sangeeta Bijlani and Sonam) who flit in and out of the frames, providing the necessary glamour to the production. All in all, the stuff of any *masala* Hindi movie.

The "difference", according to director Rajiv Rai, lies in the "treatment". "I made a conscious attempt at grandeur and tried to produce a Hollywood film. I didn't use too many zoom shots, for instance, because I wanted the picture to look as slick as possible," he says. Everything was done on a larger-than-life scale—set design, picturisation, characterisation, action sequences. Money was no problem at all. *Tridev*'s producer, Gulshan Rai, was willing to spend any amount on his son's venture—the *tirchitopiwal* song sequence cost Rs 10 lakhs; the fire sequence accounted for another Rs 35 lakhs; and the set in Ooty, where the climax of the film was shot, took between Rs 50 and 60 lakhs to construct.

Says art director Bijon Das Gupta, "It was a lavish affair. Almost every scene was mounted on sets. To do this, you



TOP OF THE POPS

THE NEW HITS OF THE WEEK

Tridev (Hindi) - A massive production with a star-studded cast, this film is a must-watch for fans of action and romance. It features a grand set in Ooty and a thrilling climax.

Everyone's raving about the set on the waterfall. For the first time, ordinary people have reacted to a set, not just the industrywallahs."

Its construction took some doing though. The crew had to first build an approach road to the fall and then three bridges before they could reach the actual site. One of the bridges, built right across the fall to the central point of construction, was as much as 400 feet long. As it turned out, the approach road built to transport building materials to the construction site could not be used. After the rains, it got far too slushy to allow the passage of any vehicular traffic. So about 12 truckloads of material that had been sent from Bombay for the construction of the set were off-loaded

at the beginning of the road, from where about 150 workers carried the stuff to the location. Altogether, 250 workers were put on the job—150 travelled to Ooty from Bombay, while the rest were locals. Says Das Gupta, "In 15 days we had the set ready, which is a record of sorts."

Then, there was the nagging worry that the set, constructed across the river, might be washed away if there was an excessive release of water from the dam. The authorities promised to cooperate. In case the water level got dangerously high, they promised to warn the film unit. But the crew would have only 10 to 15 minutes to evacuate in such an event, before the ground was swept away from under their feet. In

this circumstance, such extravagant expenditure seemed a little foolish. But the Rais had little choice. As Das Gupta puts it: "Spectacles are in. And so are expensive, lavish productions. The movie-goer wants it all—great sets, choreographed dances, lots of action, the works."

Gulshan Rai certainly wasn't going to stint on his son's second production. Rai Senior has always had the reputation of being a producer who doesn't count the cost if he feels that a good film is in the making. He has never, during his decade in the film industry, made a budget for any of his productions. Unlike other producers, he doesn't hang around the sets, breathing



down his director's neck, to ensure that everything is proceeding according to plan. But, says Gulshan Rai, "I told him (Rajiv Rai) to go ahead and do what he likes. If you want to put gold in the film, I told him, go ahead and put it. As long as it returns its price."

His son is very grateful for his support. Says Rajiv Rai, "I credit the success of my film entirely to my dad. If he hadn't given me the tools, I wouldn't have been able to do anything." He adds, "Gulshan Rai's outlook as a producer is the best in India. He never interferes with the direction, has his hand-on the pulse of the paying public and understands movies in the proper Hollywood sense of the term."

However, Rajiv Rai insists that he didn't have it all cut out, just because he

is his father's son. "Okay, Dad would do a little more for me. But he wouldn't have risked his money if he hadn't believed in what I was doing." Did Gulshan Rai realise that he had a blockbuster on his hands? Not really. Rai, who has distributed some of the most successful films ever (*Deewar*, for instance), confesses that he completely failed to accurately judge *Tridev*. "I found nothing unusual in the film. I didn't feel that it would be superior to *Yudh* (Rajiv Rai's debut film as director). But this has proved to be our most profitable venture—even more than *Deewar*."

Rajiv Rai was confident about what he was doing though. He says now that he knew even before the release that he had a big hit coming. However, he kept very quiet about it, not wishing to raise

public expectations sky-high. But his confidence in his creation was reflected in business decisions. Rai Junior had suggested that his father retain all-India distribution rights of the film. But Gulshan Rai had not agreed, unwilling to take such a risk in case the film bombed at the box-office. Better, he felt, to sell the film in at least a few territories. So, a compromise was worked out. Trimurti Films (the Rais' company) retained the Bombay, CP & Berar, Delhi, UP, and Mysore territories on a commission basis. The others were sold for a total of Rs 3,50,000. Rajiv Rai laments today, "If only he had listened to me, we would have created history. For the first time in India, a film would have been produced, directed and distributed by the same people."

THE RISING SUNNY



But the number of territories retained by him was ample measure of Gulshan Rai's confidence. Says N. Chandra, director of *Tezaab*, "Since his (Rajiv's) father took such a big risk by distributing the film in most of the territories, he must have been pretty sure that his son would be able to deliver the goods."

But nobody had bargained for *Tridev* being such a big hit. Says Anupam Kher, "There are no hard and fast rules about a film—there are just certain films the audience decides to like." Amrish Puri disagrees: "There is no communication between members of the audience. Is there any meeting held in Shivaji Park where the audience decides that they are going to like this film and dislike the other?" Rajiv Rai, however, seems to have made up his mind that this was to



GULSHAN RAI

Producer Gulshan Rai with director-son Rajiv: winning combination

be the next chartbuster even before the prints were released. "But what of that?" asks one cynic. "He probably felt the same way about *Yudh*. And we all know what happened to that."

What isn't too well known is that *Tridev* very nearly didn't happen. Made in the violence, violence, violence

mode of Indian cinema, the film ran into big trouble with the censors. The Rais got a terse one-paragraph notice from the Censor Board, informing them that their film had been deemed unworthy of release. The censors felt that the film, which shows three men fighting for social justice outside the legal framework, would be a bad influence on the people.

Then began Rajiv Rai's long struggle to get the film released. The film was viewed by one revising committee and then a second one—neither gave Rai a hearing. "This was like encountering martial law," recounts Rai. "Suddenly, you ask, where's democracy?"

Rai found it in the tribunal. The body, headed by Justice Mishra, saw the film

do these things."

Where Sunny scores is in the brawn department. His brooding machismo and sullen intensity give him the aura of the tough man (he even describes his debut film, *Be-taab*, as a "macho love story"). Today, with every movie relying on the sex-song-vendetta-violence-and-death formula to draw increasingly reluctant audiences to the theatre, Sunny is definitely what the distributor ordered. So, in film after film, he swings into the *dishum-dishum* routine, saying by way of self-justification, "The audience expects *maar-dhad* out of me." And what the audience wants, the audience gets. "I don't think I'll ever do a soft role." He adds, "I'm an aggressive sort of chap." Yes, even off-screen, he's bashed up not a few over-eager fans who had the temerity to pinch the lean Deek-check. "You don't need (to know) boxing," Sunny jokes, "you just need guts."

Sunny attributes his success in *Tridev* to Rajiv Rai's direction. "I like to have a director who knows how to present me. Rajiv knows just how to do that. When I come on the screen for the first time in *Tridev*, the audience just goes crazy."

He has reason to be pleased. In a film where the likes of Naseeruddin Shah and Jackie Shroff are part of the star-cast, Sunny is the hero—whether he is mumbling sweet-nothings into Madhuri Dixit's neck, bashing up an army of baddies single-

handed, suffering unthought-of torture in a burning house and then, when the audience thinks it's all over, emerging Rambo-like from beneath some slabs of concrete. He has the maximum footage and, understandably, derives the most mileage from the hit. Sunny has always been insistent about doing a film only if his was the meatiest and best-defined role. With *Tridev*, this policy has paid off.

But industrywallahs are inclined to take a more cautious view of the matter. N. Chandra, the director of *Tezaab*, maintains, "These days, no one actor is at the top. It's as if they are in a photo-finish. Today, if Sunny has two hits on his hands, he'll be branded number one. Tomorrow, it could be Anil Kapoor or Mithun Chakraborty."

Not that Sunny is obsessed about being number one. "I know what I'm capable of and what I'm going to be doing in the future." What of the great rivalry between him and Anil Kapoor? "Nothing has been created by me," he says. "If there is anything it is because of their moves. I don't envy anybody. If you envy me, come out and say it."

But these minor irritants have their uses. He says, "It's good these people are around to give me a tickle here or there. But the ultimate arbiter is the audience. As long as they want you, nobody can remove you. And if they say 'We don't like you, get out', there's nothing you can do about it."

and, after a few cuts, pronounced it fit for release—but with an 'A' certificate. "Unfair," says Rai. "If the censors had any sense they would make my film tax-free. After all, what does my film show? Three concerned citizens flout the law—but only to catch the bad guys and help the police. Isn't the government also giving the Punjab villagers guns for their self-defence against the terrorists? That's exactly what my film is saying." Unfair or not, the film played to only adult audiences at the theatres.

While there is something to this logic, there is little reason why *Tridev* should be singled out from among the plethora of guts-and-gore efforts that pass off as cinema today. There was as much violence in, say, *Tezaab*. So, why make an example of *Tridev*? "But that's the way the censors function," complains Rajiv Rai. "They judge your film in isolation. Try and tell them that this has been cleared before in any number of films and their only reply is, 'It's your film that is under scrutiny. Not any other.'"

Nonetheless it has had adherents for a long time now—ever since *Sho-ley* came along to change the face of

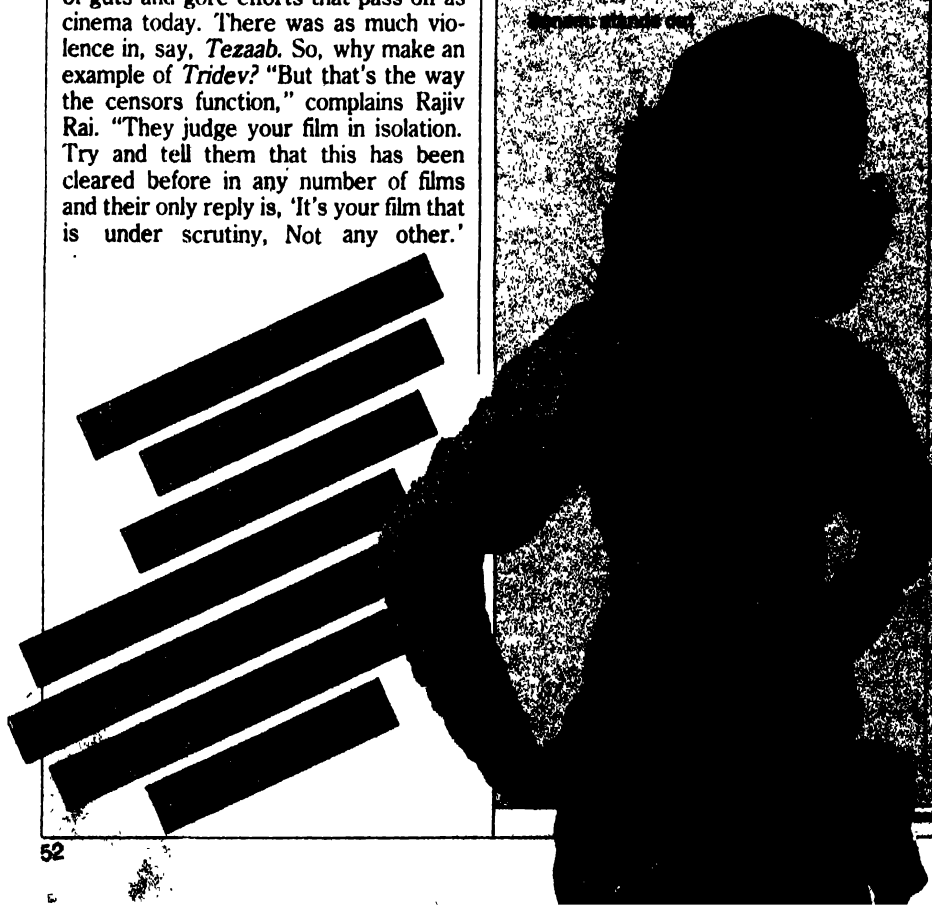
Ramesh Sippy, director of *Sholay*, does not think that *Tridev* can be com-

When in South Africa, the conduct of the mine was the best, the laborers were paid to the top. So all these farmers were asked to go to the property cupboard and to take out money for the Chinese Communist movement, which is the best friend of the farm industry (make not light, sometimes eye-blinking Chinese overpopulation and more in arrears to the extent of one hundred after the strike out).

100-443886-1

"The fact is, we're not
 interested in the
 government," says
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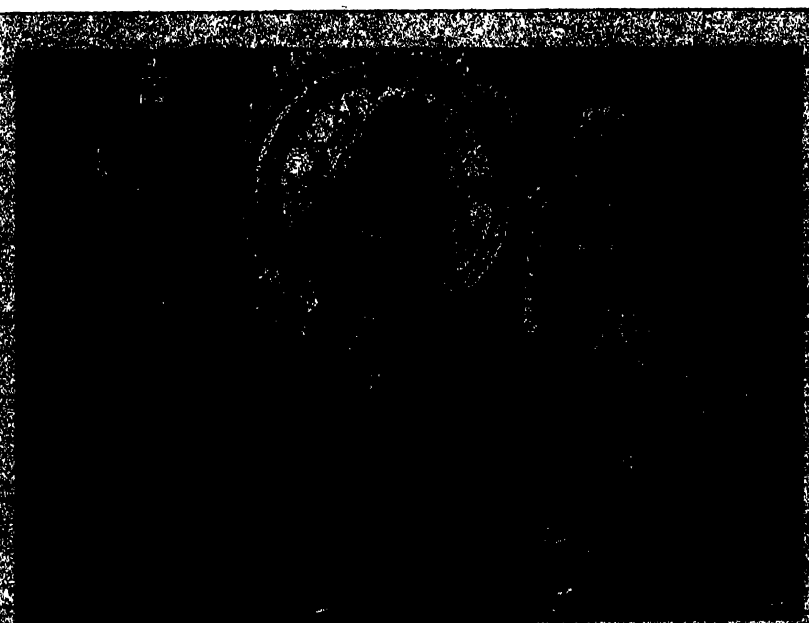
The Navy was ordered to take possession of the ship by force if necessary. The ship was taken to the Naval Yard at Washington, D.C., where it was placed under guard.



pared to his creation. "It's too far-fetched and premature to compare it with *Sholay*," Agrees film critic Khalid Mohammad, "The comparison with *Sholay* is laughable. *Tridev* can never hope to measure up to *Sholay* in terms of box-office collections." N. Chandra, on the contrary, feels that by comparing *Tridev* to *Sholay*, full justice is not being done to the former. "Don't forget," he says, "that the movie (*Sholay*) was released 14 years back when video wasn't

anywhere on the scene. Obviously, collections were better. According to director Mahesh Bhatt, "This is just another film with the normal box-office trappings. But as far as production values go, the film is just as slick (as *Sholay*)." Agrees Amrish Puri, "It compares with *Sholay* in terms of slickness. It may not be the same kind of slickness, but then a social drama can't have the same quality as a production of *Ben Hur*." The success of *Tridev* has given a

fresh lease of life to the multi-starrer. Industry watchers claim that it will lead to a wave of *Tridev* clones. Even so, can *Tridev* be called a trend-setter? No, says Yash Chopra. "Trend-setting films are those that have a new theme or a novel technique or ones that tackle certain problems in an interesting manner." *Tridev*, on the other hand, relies on the same formula on which every second Hindi movie is based. As has been the rule for the past year or so,



Chandra, Puri, and Bhatt, who were all part of the *Sholay* team, are now part of the *Tridev* team. The film is a sequel to the 1975 film *Sholay*, which was a massive success. *Tridev* is a multi-starrer film, featuring a large cast of actors. The film is set in a rural area and follows the story of a group of people who are fighting against a powerful landlord. The film is a social drama, and it is based on a story by the famous Hindi writer Premchand. The film is a sequel to the 1975 film *Sholay*, which was a massive success. *Tridev* is a multi-starrer film, featuring a large cast of actors. The film is set in a rural area and follows the story of a group of people who are fighting against a powerful landlord. The film is a social drama, and it is based on a story by the famous Hindi writer Premchand.

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VIP

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it is selling on the basis of one hit song. First there was *Papa kehte hain* (*Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*), then *One two ka four* (*Ram Lakhan*), and *Ek do teen* (*Tezaab*). Now it's *Oye oye* (*Tridev*).

Ramesh Sippy feels that the success of *Tridev* does not mean that "multi-starrers are likely to make a comeback". "But there will be a conscious attempt to make good films. The success of *Tridev* proves that a well-made film can still make a dent in the box-office. In the last one or two years, filmmakers thought that they could get away with anything. But they have been proved wrong."

However, multi-starrers will prevail. At least, as long as most stars think the way Jackie Shroff does. He says he has turned down many films in which he was asked to play the sole hero. He prefers to work in multi-starrers as he feels more secure. If you are the only hero and the film bombs, you end up getting all the blame, he says, so why not play it safe? "And anyway," he adds, "no matter how many people there are in the film, I still shine through."

The desire of actors and actresses to "shine through", often makes it difficult to make a movie with a truckload of stars. "You have great problems trying to justify even the smallest of parts," says Rajiv Rai. However, most of *Tridev*'s stars are satisfied with their roles. Sunny, naturally, is thrilled at being the central character; Jackie feels that the characterisation of his part is excellent; and Naseeruddin probably got the most interesting role. And as for Amrish Puri, as the megalomaniac villain, he gets nearly as much importance as all the heroes put together.

Understandably, Puri is full of the film. In a world where he plays the same character in every movie, with just a few minor variations (though Puri insists that "it doesn't stop me from playing each part differently"), *Tridev* came as a welcome break. "This character, Bhujang," says Puri, "had different shades, different colours to him. And that is what made him interesting." Bhujang was probably a more difficult and demanding role than Mogambo—the oddball villain Puri played in *Mr India*. Says Rajiv Rai, "Mogambo was a comic strip character. He was conceived and played as an eccentric sort of chap who wants to take over India. The characterisation of Bhujang is more genuine." Puri was initially hesitant about dancing in the *Oye oye* number. But it worked out in the end, with the audience breaking up at the sight of a drunken Puri lurching after the

heroines in a clumsy imitation of their movements.

Perhaps, the person who gets the worst of the script is Anupam Kher, who wanders in and out of the frame, looking like a man who is not quite sure what he's doing. Even Kher has benefited from the film. He has been offered nearly a dozen movies in which he has been asked to play father to Madhuri Dixit as in *Tridev*.

Too much should not be made of *Tridev*'s success, caution industry insiders. As Rajiv Rai puts it, "For every *Tridev* that does well, there are another 50 films that flop. So this success should not be regarded as evidence of the film industry's return to good health." Agrees Gulshan Rai, "There's no doubt that video has killed the film industry."

Only now, instead of sitting back and

grumbling, filmmakers are trying every trick in the book to ensure that their films don't make for good video-viewing. While lavishly appointed sets and spectacular effects are one answer, some producers try novel methods. Vinod Chopra, for instance, has shot an entire love-making sequence in dim light for his forthcoming release, *Parinda*. "Nothing, just nothing, is going to show on video," says Chopra. "The audience will just have to see it on the big screen." The makers of *Ram Lakhan* used a different method to get the audiences to the theatre. The duration of the film is a little over three hours to ensure that the whole movie does not fit into a single video cassette. In the recent Aamir Khan-Juhi Chawla release *Love Love Love*, an entire dance sequence has been left out of the video version, while the publicity campaign (including the posters plastered all over the city)



Jackie Shroff (left) and Anupam Kher: the outlaw son of an honest policeman

revolves around that very number. The strategy is obvious: whet the audience's appetite and then don't give them what they want on video. But this strategy could boomerang. Explains Anupam Kher, "If your film is not good enough, the audience is not going to come no matter what gimmicks you try."

This, it appears, is the key. Increasingly, there is less and less space in the industry for the filmmaker who doesn't know his craft. *Tridev* has made one thing clear: that cinema, however hackneyed, will sell if you serve up the *masala* in a slick package. And, of course, a little bit of *Oye oye* magic never hurt anybody.

Seema Goswami with Adite Chatterjee/Bombay

Jackie Shroff
prefers working in
multi-starrers. If
you are the only hero
and the film bombs,
you end up getting
all the blame

Bullying the bully



India's intervention in the island has been a disaster

KULDIP NAYAR

I don't want to adopt an I-told-you-so attitude, but from whichever angle one looks at India's intervention in Sri Lanka, it has been a disaster. We have acquired the image of a bully in the Indian subcontinent and our action has not helped the Sri Lankans. We have lost more than 1,000 officers and soldiers and nearly Rs 3,500 crores have gone down the drain.

We have been humiliated and just as America will not be able to erase easily bitter memories of its experiences in Vietnam or the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, India also will never be able to forget or live down what it did in Sri Lanka. As far as disastrous military intervention is concerned, we are on a par with the super-powers.

Looking back, India would have had less reason for regret if we had not intervened. But then, the Rajiv Gandhi government was obsessed with the idea of an easy victory. And at a time when the image of the Prime Minister was taking a beating following the Fairfax scandal, stunts such as the air-dropping of relief supplies on the island and then rushing in troops to crush Tamil insurgency were widely believed to be face-saving gimmicks.

THAT THE intervention has not been fruitful is not surprising; any impartial observer of events in the island could have predicted it, and many did. But the point to ponder is the kind of scenario that India's intervention has created. It is worse than what it was when our troops went in. At that time, the Sri Lankan army had decimated the LTTE's strength in most parts of Jaffna and civilian casualties were inflicted on the Tamils by the country's security forces. What was being done by the army was inhuman and the entire world watched in shock and horror at the atrocities being perpetrated on them. It was full of sympathy for the underdogs, the Tamils.

Our intervention came as a relief for the Tamils in the

Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. And we took upon ourselves the burden of liquidating the LTTE, which had considerable support among the Tamils. I have no doubt that the government that we have set up in the North-East Province will collapse even before our last soldier departs and there will be reprisals against the Tamils who cooperated with us.

The Premadasa government, which made peace with the Tamil Tigers, has probably assured them of an autonomous state within Sri Lanka. Even if Colombo has not gone that far, the fate of the forces which are on the side of India is sealed. The LTTE will be the boss in the North-Eastern Province. Were the Sri Lankan government to join issue with it, the obvious inference would be that it has made peace with the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the Sinhalese counterpart of the LTTE.

The Premadasa government appears to be afraid of the JVP because it is entrenched among the underprivileged Sinhalese, who form a major segment of Sri Lanka's population. In fact, the JVP's writ appears to run even in Colombo, because it can get away with whatever it does.

Take, for example, the austerity measures it has imposed on many affluent Sinhalese families in the city: not to have any sort of fancy crockery or light more than one bulb in the house. Were the Sri Lankan army to be deployed to chastise them—a remote possibility—the Premadasa government would expose its flanks in the north-east, where the LTTE will rule the roost.

I DO not know what will happen to the 1.3 million Tamil labourers who work in tea gardens, hundreds of miles away from the stronghold of the LTTE. S. Thondaman (the Sri Lankan textiles and rural development minister) is their representative, and even though he told me when I met him last that they could take care of themselves, I am not sure that they can.

The extent to which anti-Indian sentiment runs among the Sinhalese and members of the government does not augur well for the Indians who are doing business in Colombo or any other place outside the North-East Province. The LTTE will be equally brutal in its treatment of the Indians.

Perhaps New Delhi can take the credit for the Tamil Tigers going to the negotiating table after its back was broken by the IPKF. Even otherwise, with the passage of time, this would have happened if we had not gone in or denied shelter and arms to the LTTE. Colombo would have eventually offered an autonomous state within Sri Lanka to the

Tamils as it has reportedly done during its negotiations with the LTTE.

Rajiv Gandhi cannot wash his hands off the problem now without losing electoral support in the country, particularly Tamil Nadu. There are open hints that New Delhi may seek a Cyprus-like solution (despite the opposition of a majority of Muslims in the North-East Province), that is, carving out a province for the Tamils and defending it.

This is precisely the Eelam which the Tigers wanted and which New Delhi fought against by sending its forces to Sri Lanka. I do not know whether this will help Rajiv Gandhi at the polls but it will certainly not be to the good of the country, which will be branded imperialistic. ■

A complete withdrawal and an open declaration by India not to intervene again may bring about a peace of sorts between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The question is whether Rajiv Gandhi has the wisdom to see this

Terrorists strike again

Punjab terrorists blast a sophisticated and powerful bomb inside a bus, killing 13 people

HARYANA

It was the same old ghastly game of numbers. Thirteen innocent bus passengers were killed—more than half of them blown to pieces—and 36 injured, when a powerful bomb, planted inside a Haryana Roadways bus, exploded near Karna Lake Tourist Complex in Karnal district.

Among the victims were two children and three women. And such was the impact of the sophisticated plastic explosive—one of the latest acquisitions of the terrorists in Punjab—that only a few of the victims could be recognised. The bodies, according to eye-witnesses at Karnal's civil hospital, were burnt beyond recognition with limbs blown to bits. The blast ripped open one side of the Delhi-bound bus and reduced it to smithereens.

The aftermath of the tragedy was also

a morbid repetition of the past. Hundreds of agitated people assembled at the hospital where shocked and wailing relatives of the victims kept pouring in throughout the day. This created a law and order problem when policemen tried to stop people from thronging and jamming the hospital corridors.

The only silver lining was that the terrorists' machination fell short of its aim—inciting a communal backlash in the neighbouring state of Punjab. The evidently enraged people—mostly Jats and Punjabi Hindus—refused to fall into the terrorists' time-worn trap. On the contrary, thousands offered medical aid to the hospital authorities instead of

going berserk on the streets, a situation that would have surely come in handy to anti-national elements. It was also reassuring to see policemen queueing up to donate blood.

The tragedy in Haryana took place within 24 hours of terrorists showering bullets on people at a busy marketplace in Jammu, another city close to Punjab. Seven innocent passersby were killed and several others injured in the shoot-out. The incidents in Jammu and Karnal were a grim reminder of the fact that the terrorists can strike at will not only in Punjab but in the neighbouring states as well. The police suspect that the bomb in the Haryana Roadways bus was planted at its starting point—Kasauli, in Himachal Pradesh, about 55 km from Chandigarh. The police say that the

explosive consisted of a very advanced variety of quartz timer, unlike the traditional pencil-type time devices. Its detonator was small but deadlier, and the plastic explosive material less bulky but several times more effective than the old petroleum jelly stuff. All this points to the fact that the terrorists are better equipped today than in the past.

The Karnal blast, which took place at about one pm, has pushed the security forces into tightening their security bandobast even during the day time. The practice in Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh so far has been to check an individual passenger's luggage after seven pm. According to official sources in the capital, all buses leaving from the Inter-State Bus Terminus (ISBT) would be checked with metal

detectors before they start. The route inspectors, drivers and conductors are being given the additional responsibility of checking buses.

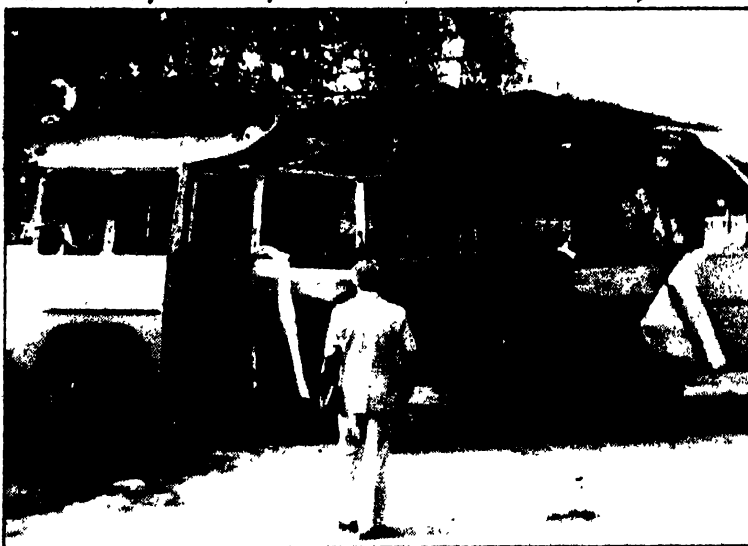
According to intelligence sources, the authorities in north India are planning to introduce airport-type security arrangements at all major bus stations in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi to instil confidence among passengers. Their long term plans include installation of X-ray machines and deployment of dog

squad

to detect explosives. But going by the desperation of the terrorists and their access to the latest devices, it seems that it will be next to impossible to prevent terrorist killings even with modern deterrents. This is because the police have confirmed reports that the Punjab terrorists have acquired devices such as the Samitex bomb of Israeli origin, which cannot be detected by X-ray machines or sniffer dogs. This gives credence to the theory of Julio F. Rebeiro, the adviser to Punjab Governor, that terrorism cannot be stopped by the law and order machinery, it can only be contained.

Vipul Mudgal/Chandigarh

The ill-fated Haryana Roadways bus: the detonator was small but deadly



The police say that the explosive used consisted of a very advanced variety of quartz timer, unlike the traditional pencil-type time devices. This points to the fact that the terrorists are better equipped today than in the past

The garden of contention

The state takes over control of the Agri-Horticultural Society in a surprise move

TAMIL NADU

The way the Tamil Nadu government took possession of about 17 acres of primeland in the heart of Madras city on 5 August, smacked of a vendetta. The government had schemed the take-over of the Madras Agri-Horticultural Society, managed by a person who is known to be a follower of the Opposition leader Jayalalitha of the AIADMK, in such a manner that he had very little chance to move court.

In a surprise move, the administration took charge of the land on Cathedral Road in central Madras on Saturday evening, giving the society's secretary, V. Krishnamurthy, no time to get any legal remedy, since the following day was a holiday. The take-over was carried out a few hours after the society's legal counsel, G. Rajagopalan, met the state revenue secretary, A.M. Swaminathan, in connection with a government inquiry into the society's affairs. The government apparently did not grant the society's request for more time to prepare its case before the inquiry officer.

According to Rajagopalan, the revenue secretary had told him that the society's request for the postponement of the inquiry was a matter for the higher authorities to decide and promised to inform Rajagopalan about their decision in due course. But that very day a large posse of revenue officials and policemen arrived to execute the take-over. "There is no doubt that this has been done only because the society's secretary, Krishnamurthy, is a close family friend of Jayalalitha," Rajagopalan claims.

But the government says that it had been receiving many complaints regarding financial mismanagement of the society ever since it started hiring out its garden to film companies for shooting and leased out a portion of its premises to a well-known hotel group. Krishnamurthy, however, insists that the state's move was malafide and has taken the matter to the Madras High Court.

R. Bhagwan Singh/Madras

Pounding the press

Officials of the Dhanbad district administration wreak vengeance on journalists

BIHAR

Journalists working in the south Bihar town of Dhanbad face a pincer attack from the notorious coal mafia, on the one hand, and bureaucrats, on the other. The newsmen have incurred the wrath of both for having exposed the mafia-bureaucrat nexus from time to time and, in July, the law-keepers came down on the scribes in a manner that befits law-breakers.

On 28 July, Ashok Verma, the Dhanbad correspondent of the *Nav Bharat Times* became a victim of bureaucratic vengefulness. At noon that day, he went to the Dhanbad collectorate to cover a students' demonstration that was being held there and found to his horror Salman Ravi, a reporter from the Dhanbad daily, *New Republic*, lying on the ground in front of additional district magistrate (ADM) Rajbala Verma's room. Ravi had been brutally beaten by the ADM's bodyguards after they had an altercation with him over the taking of photographs.

Ashok Verma, who arrived at the scene minutes after the incident, led a group of journalists into the ADM's office, demanding an explanation for the assault on Ravi and his photographer and the arrest of the policemen concerned. But seeing the journalists coming, Rajbala Verma took refuge in deputy commissioner (DC) Raj Sevak Sharma's chamber, where she was joined by her IAS husband Jyoti Tubid, the deputy development commissioner of Dhanbad.

The journalists followed the ADM into the DC's room and squatted on the floor and heated exchanges followed. Finding the situation getting out of control, Sharma ordered the journalists out of his room, who decided to leave and take Ravi to the hospital. Meanwhile, the

assembled students, who learnt of the assault on the journalist, turned violent and started throwing stones at the collectorate. This led to an indiscriminate lathi-charge by the police, who beat up anyone who came within their reach.

At the hospital, where Ashok Verma, with his professional colleagues, was trying to get the injured Ravi admitted, was informed by a policeman that the officer-in-charge of the local police station, Rajendra Singh, was coming to arrest him. But the journalists did not take this warning seriously and stayed on.

Fifteen minutes later, reportedly under instructions from Rajbala Verma and her husband, Tubid, Rajendra Singh hauled Verma to the DC's office after beating him up with a *lathi* and kicking him in public. Verma has alleged that, in the DC's room, he was again assaulted by

Initially, despite a court directive, the police refused to hospitalise Verma. Later, however, they handcuffed him and paraded him all the way to the hospital



Rajbala and her husband. He was then packed off to a police lock-up, after being charged with attempt to murder, molesting, dacoity, rioting and creating public disorder.

The next day was Saturday and the police are said to have deliberately delayed taking Verma to court (which closes early on Saturdays) so as to prevent him from getting a bail and, despite the judge's directive, the police refused to shift him to hospital on the pretext that no police escort was available. Later, however, the police handcuffed Verma and paraded him all the way to the hospital and kept him handcuffed even there. He was unchained only after the chief minister Satyendra Narain Sinha intervened in the matter.

A delegation of journalists met the chief minister (CM) on 29 July evening. The CM told them that he had instructed the director general of police (DGP) to arrange for Verma's release immediately. He also announced that he would order an inquiry into the allegation of assault and handcuffing of Verma. But the chief minister's writ did not seem to run beyond the limits of Patna. During the next three days, the DC of Dhanbad, Ram Sevak Sharma, denied that he had received any order from Patna directing him to release Verma, but admitted that he had been advised not to oppose Verma's bail petition. It was only after the journalists in the state capital boycotted the Assembly on two consecutive days and Dhanbad and Ranchi newspapers appeared with blank spaces in their editorial columns as a mark of protest, that Patna woke up to the fact that its minions at Dhanbad had gone too far.

To make amends, cases against the two journalists, Ashok Verma and Salman



Ashok Verma: harsh treatment

Ravi, were withdrawn and police officer Rajendra Singh was suspended on 2 August. On 3 August, Dhanbad's superintendent of police (SP), Jagdish Raj, was transferred and, on 4 August, the government announced in the Assembly that a committee headed by a former judge, Justice Sarvar Ali, and consisting of two editors (to be nominated by the Editors' Guild) and two journalists (to be nominated by the government) would inquire into the incident.

But with the bitter relation that has developed between the press and the administration the journalists in Dhanbad no longer feel safe to express themselves freely.

Jaishankar Gupta/Patna

The challenge within

Leaders and workers of the state Janata Dal resent Biju Patnaik's way of functioning

ORISSA

Biju Patnaik does not seem to be preparing the state Janata Dal for the election battle which is only a few months away; he appears to be presiding over its liquidation. A series of recent developments has undermined Patnaik's leadership and has created consternation in Opposition ranks. Never before had his leadership and style of functioning been as manifestly challenged as they were during the last few weeks.

Political circles were surprised and Dal workers stunned when Patnaik announced the names of the party's poll candidates for all the 21 parliamentary seats in the state on 4 August. By making this declaration, Patnaik wanted to show that he was still the boss, after the state Dal parliamentary board chairman, Bhajaman Behera, adjourned the board's first meeting in the wake of differences between him and Patnaik on the question of the procedure that was to be adopted in choosing the candidates.

But besides further antagonising Behera and his supporters, Patnaik's action has also angered a large and powerful section of his own followers. On Behera's side are former Union ministers Rabi Ray and Samarendra Kundu, former state ministers Banka Behary Das and Anang Uday Singh Deo, former MP Anadi Das, and MLA Trilochan Kanungo. The known Patnaik loyalists such as Srikant Jena, Bijoy Mahapatra, Nalinikanta Mohanty, Ashok Das and Surendra Naik are also agitated over their leader's "rash action spelling disaster for the party's poll prospects".

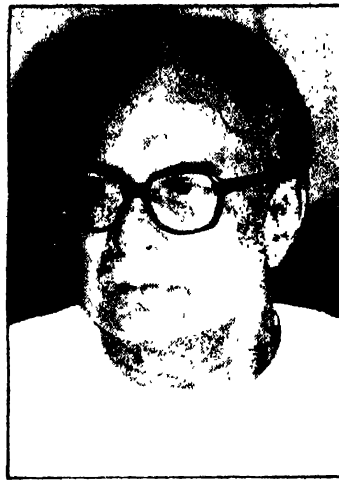
Bhagey Gobardhan, an IAS officer-turned-politician and the party's leading light in the tribal-dominated Mayurbhanj

district, has also questioned Patnaik's action and has threatened that he and his wife would contest as independent candidates, if Patnaik continued to be "misguided by the politically dying horse, Chandramohan Singh", who happens to be Patnaik's pet in the district and the treasurer of the state Janata Dal. Patnaik had dropped Gobardhan to make Singh a member of the state Dal Parliamentary Board.

Biju Patnaik's move to draw up his own list of candidates is only the latest in a series of impulsive steps he has taken during the recent weeks. The result has been that the party is now a sharply divided house. His earlier decision of forging an alliance between the Janata Dal, the CPI and the CPI(M) at first appeared to be a welcome strategy, but it soon turned out to be the first major cause of a crisis within the Dal when it

was found that, as a pre-condition for the pact with the left, Patnaik had conceded the Jagatsinghpur seat to the CPI state secretary, Loknath Choudhury, and the Bhubaneswar seat to the CPI(M).

The allotment of Jagatsinghpur to the CPI created great resentment within the party and Rabi Ray threatened to contest from there. Ray and his supporters argue that since he lost the 1984 polls to



Biju Patnaik: Impulsive moves

his Congress(I) rival by a slender margin of a little over 1,000 votes and has been nursing this constituency ever since, he should be given this seat and not shifted to the Puri constituency. A large section within the Dal, including many of his own followers, are openly criticising Patnaik's decision which, they fear, may result in the loss of both the seats. They also feel that the Opposition's prospects of winning would brighten if the CPI(M) leader, Shivaji Patnaik, is shifted to Puri, leaving the Dal's own candidate in Bhubaneswar.

Patnaik's critics are now openly challenging his "arbitrary manner" of selecting the candidates and managing party affairs. They have been planning a trip to Delhi to draw the attention of V.P. Singh, the Dal president, and other

national leaders to the present crisis in the Dal's state unit. They complain that Patnaik has been thrusting his whimsical decisions upon the party without caring to discuss any issue at the various organisational forums and without consulting his senior colleagues.

Apart from his action of "arbitrarily allotting" seats to the CPI and the CPI(M), his other decisions which have given rise to sharp reactions in the Dal relate to the seats of Bolangir and Kendrapara. Patnaik issued a letter to the independent legislator, Balgopal Mishra, asking him to contest from Bolangir on the Dal symbol, ignoring the claims of the Dal's own aspirants. And in the case of the prestigious Kendrapara seat, Patnaik has announced the name of Prabhat Samantaray, whose selection has shocked even Patnaik camp-followers. They point out that Kendrapara, the only seat won by the Opposition in both the 1980 and 1984 parliamentary polls, will be definitely lost, for Samantaray not only lacks the stature but was, till recently, hobnobbing with the Congress(I) to gain an entry into the ruling party.

To compound the Dal's crisis, its student and youth wings are also sharply divided, with each faction openly trading charges against the other to the benefit of the Congress(I). Biju Patnaik, who did not bother to resolve the differences, because both the groups swore by his leadership, now finds his authority eroding with one faction taking him to task for running the party in a "partisan manner."

An unruly crowd of angry youths, led by party legislator Pradip Maharathu barged into Patnaik's office last month, demanding an explanation for the manner in which he was handling the affairs of the party's student wing, Chhatra Janata.

The rivalry between the Chhatra Janata, the official wing, and the Chhatra Sangharsa Samity, a recently-constituted forum of pro-Dal students, was an open secret. The Chhatra Janata leadership had been accusing the Samity leaders of running a parallel organisation while the latter charged the Chhatra Janata president, Uma Ballav Rath, and his followers with hobnobbing with the chief minister's son-in-law, Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, and failing to launch a sustained movement against the government. Biju Patnaik never tried to iron out the differences and the shimmering rivalry finally developed into an open clash, earning the Dal a bad name in the state. The only remedy Patnaik was left with in the end was to announce the dissolution of both the bodies.

Sarada P. Nanda/Bhubaneswar

Walking away with the glory

The Congress(I) reduces a peace march to a farce by leaving the participants to fend for themselves

RAJASTHAN

Fooled the people is a game politicians like to play. This became evident during the week-long *padayatra* (walk) organised by the ruling Congress(I) in Rajasthan to spread the word of communal harmony in the state which was rocked by a series of communal riots in the last two years.

The plan of the *padayatra* was announced by Ashok Gehlot in his capacity as the president of the Rajasthan



The processionists entering Makrana town: left out in the cold

Pradesh Congress(I) Committee (RPCC-I) after riots in Makrana, in March this year, left a trail of death and destruction. Three people were killed in the carnage and properties worth crores of rupees had been damaged. Gehlot had announced that chief minister Shiv Char-

Talking of language

Hindi writers demand a better deal for Urdu

Ever heard of Hindi writers taking up the cudgels in support of Urdu? If not, here is some news for you. A large number of Hindi writers met under the banner of the Janwadi Lekhak Sangh (Democratic Writers Association) at the Ghalib Academy auditorium in Delhi's historic Nizamuddin Basti on 5 August to protest against the injustice being meted out to Urdu and demanded that it be accorded the status of the second official language in states where there was a sizeable Urdu-speaking population. The meeting helped demolish the myth that the relationship between the two languages was antagonistic and demonstrated the fact that prominent Hindi writers were worried about the way in which Urdu was being discriminated against by the state and society.

It was no wonder, therefore, that a number of well-known Urdu writers, including poets Ghulam Rabbani

Taban and Shahab Jafri, novelist Joginder Pal, critics Qamar Rais and Muhammad Hasan, attended the meeting which was chaired by the Sangh's general secretary and Hindi critic, Prof. O.P. Grewal.

Dr Naim Ahmad, who teaches Urdu at Aligarh Muslim University, drew attention to the unusual nature

The meeting held by the Janwadi Lekhak Sangh demolished the myth that the relationship between Hindi and Urdu was antagonistic and demonstrated that prominent Hindi writers were worried about the way Urdu was being treated



The *padayatra* began with a promise. But once the marchers crossed the limits of Pushkar town, the leaders decided to quit, leaving the procession to be led by a handful of volunteers

an Mathur would also participate in the peace walk to instil confidence in the people.

But before the programme could be implemented, Heeralal Deopura replaced Gehlot as the RPCC(I) chief and the latter was inducted into Mathur's Cabinet as the home minister. Deopura, however, announced soon after taking over that the programme planned by his

predecessor would be implemented.

As had been planned, the *padayatra* began on 27 July from the holy town of Pushkar, with chief minister Mathur, Gehlot, Deopura, almost members of the Cabinet, a large number of MLAs and RPCC(I) office-bearers offering prayers at the famous Brahma temple of Pushkar. Though the walk was to have been organised by the Congress(I), in reality,

of the meeting and Dr Chanchal Chauhan, a distinguished critic and teacher of English literature at Delhi University, set the ball rolling by saying that the fight for the cause of Urdu was part of a wider struggle for democratic rights. He stressed the fact that Urdu originated in India and was as much an Indian language as any other. The true democratic attitude would be, he said, to treat all Indian languages on a par and help them develop fully. He demanded teaching facilities for Urdu in schools and felt it should be declared the second official language wherever there was a sizeable Urdu-speaking population so that administrative and judicial work could be carried out in that language.

Narendra Vashishtha, a well-known Hindi lyricist, emphasised the fact that Urdu was an integral part of Indian culture and that both Hindi and Urdu belonged to the same family. He said that the country's Urdu-speaking population felt constrained because of the neglect and virtual suppression of the language. "If I am told that I cannot speak my own language, what can I do but remain

silent," said Vashishtha, explaining the predicament of the Urdu-speaking people.

Dr Jabrimal Pares, a noted critic and Reader at the Indira Gandhi Open University said that the development of Urdu was in no way detrimental to the interests of Hindi, and ridiculed the thesis that Urdu and Hindi were basically one and the same. The advocates of this view have been suggesting that Urdu should adopt the Devnagari script, but Parekh felt that the "script of Urdu is an integral part of its personality and those who raise the demand for a change in its script do so with the malafide intention of making Urdu wither away".

The famous novelist Bhishma Sahni of *Tamasha* fame, lamented that India was perhaps the only country where there was so much tension on issues of language. He regretted that politicians and communalists were trying to impose Hindi over the other Indian languages and called for the formation of a broad secular and democratic front to fight for the cause of Urdu.

Kuldeep Kumar/New Delhi

however, it turned out to be an entirely government-managed affair. Forest minister Govind Singh Gujar was made the overall in-charge of the programme and half a dozen other ministers were given the responsibility of managing the show individually on each day of the programme.

The *padayatra* began with a promise. About 2,000 people marched through the narrow lanes of the holy city raising slogans like: "Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Isai apas mein hai bhai bhai" (Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians are brothers). But once the marchers crossed the limits of the town, the leaders decided to quit in their cars, leaving the *padayatra* to be managed by a handful of volunteers. As was to be expected under such circumstances, the number of marchers began to dwindle every day and by the time the procession reached Makrana, the number of people taking part came down to less than a hundred. Forest minister Gujar, however, showed much pluck by covering the entire distance on foot despite his illness, while his cabinet colleagues failed to show up even for a day.

When the processionists reached Nausar Ghati in the afternoon, they discovered to their dismay that the food that was arranged for them had been consumed by the members of the Youth Congress(I), and they faced a similar situation after they walked into Ajmer city in the evening. In fact, no one seemed in the least interested about where the marchers ate or slept. Finally, when all arrangements that were supposed to have been made by the Congress(I) had collapsed, Gujar requested the forest department to take over and ensure that the people reached their destination in body and soul.

The ultimate farce took place on 3 August at Makrana. All the leaders—who were nowhere to be seen after the march started—surfaced again to lead the procession that was nearing its destination, under heavy security arrangements. Armed jawans of the Rajasthan Armed Constabulary (RAC) had taken up position on the roof tops of all the houses along the route of the *padayatra* in Makrana town.

In the end, the leaders walked up to a platform that was specially built to welcome the marchers, and even before the real heroes could come anywhere near the rostrum, the leaders were garlanded and laudatory speeches made. The leaders stole the show while those who had braved the marathon walk were left out in the cold.

Millap Chand Dandia / Jaipur

Fishing in troubled waters

Police fire on fishermen protesting against the government's ban on mechanised fishing

KERALA Every year as the rains arrive tension mounts along the 590-km long coast of Kerala. It is the breeding season of the seafood industry's single largest export item—

prawns. For the past few years, traditional fishermen and owners of mechanised boats have been fighting each other over the issue of monsoon trawling. The crux of the problem is overfishing by mechanised boats (trawlers) leading to a dwindling catch to Father Thomas Kotchery, a Catholic priest who leads the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF), an organisation of traditional fishermen: "It is a battle for survival. We cannot remain silent spectators to the dwindling of marine resources due to excessive trawling by mechanised fishing boats."

This struggle along the Kerala coast over fishing rights between the owners of 3,500 mechanised boats, on the one hand, and small fishermen who use 26,000 fishing canoes and 9,500 country craft fitted with outboard motors, on the other, is nothing new. Tension always peaks during the rains when the prawns migrate towards the coast to breed on the sea bed. Fishermen contend that the mechanised boats comb the sea bed with their trawler nets, disturbing the breeding process, thus reducing the catch over the years.

Prawns account for over half of Kerala's Rs 400-crore annual seafood exports, and figures show that prawn landings have declined dramatically from 51,600 tonnes in 1980 (when trawlers first appeared) to a mere 28,100 tonnes in 1987. According to a top marine scientist at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute at Cochin, this fall was caused by overfishing. Scientists feel that the number of boats operating in the shallow Kerala coast is twice that of what is required for optimum exploitation of the available resources.

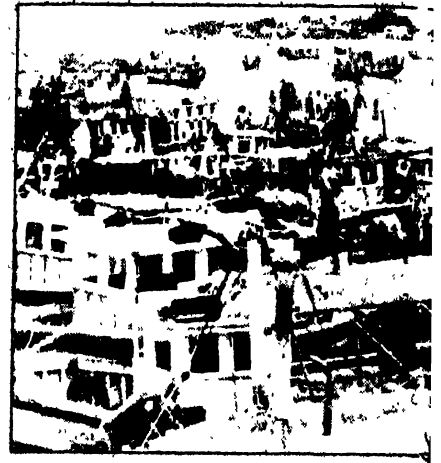
The truth is that there are too many fishermen. Successive governments in Kerala had formed expert panels to study the advisability of trawling during the monsoon. The Babu Paul and Kalvar

Commissions set up by the previous Congress ministry had entered its findings in favour of trawling. So, when the new CPI(M)-led government came to power in 1987, they constituted another commission, headed by Prof. Balakrishna Pillai, which favoured the traditional sector and advised against mechanised fishing.

Last year, though the government banned coastal trawling in the months between June and August, in a 40-kilometre stretch between Neendakara and Sakthikulangara area of Quilon district, the traditional fishermen were up in arms because they saw through the government's game. The LDF (Left Democratic Front) made the exemption on the ground that 75 per cent of the prize "karikkadi" prawn could only be found in that particular area and could be netted only by trawlers. But the fishermen felt that the LDF was trying to favour irrigation minister and RSP strongman Baby John, a leading seafood exporter. He has been representing Chavara constituency (which includes Neendakara and Sakthikulangara) for the last 30 years.

But this year, the KSMTF put pressure on the CPI(M) leadership not to exempt the Neendakara area. The CPI(M), which has been trying to take over the fishermen's cooperatives along the coast, decided to impose a total ban on trawling, mainly because of political considerations. Though the All-Kerala Boat Operators' Association (AKBOA) challenged the order, its plea was rejected by the High Court. Soon, tension began to build up in the Sakthikulangara-Neendakara coastal belt, as more than 500 mechanised boats defied the ban and ventured into the sea. The police were helpless and the fisheries department was unable to take any preventive measure under the Marine Regulation Act as it had only a few speedboats at its disposal. This sensitive area is mainly controlled by the trawler owners. The agitating Sakthikulangara fishermen, belonging to the mechanised fishing lobby, clashed with policemen towards the beginning of this month and two people died when the police opened fire. The Congress(I), which is trying to fish in troubled waters, alleged that the policemen went on the rampage in Sakthikulangara and molested a large number of women.

Meanwhile, the ban has created social problems and thrown out of work thousands of fishermen in Kerala, as a



trawler not only provides direct employment to about 30 people, but helps many more find jobs in the peeling sheds, ice factories and the transport sector. It is clear that with the parliamentary elections round the corner, no political party in Kerala will risk their vote-bank the traditional fishermen by favouring the mechanised sector. But Baby John, who enjoys a large following among trawler fishermen told SUNDAY, "The mechanised boats are mainly owned by groups of poor fishermen who have

Money for the party

The Congress(I)'s fund-raising scheme abets corruption

An innocuous scheme launched by the Congress(I) to raise funds has provided Congressmen with a legitimate means of making unaccounted money. In May this year, the All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I) issued a circular to the party's state units, asking them to mobilise resources for the coming elections by selling coupons of different denominations.

The AICC(I) fixed different quotas for different categories of partymen. Each minister in the states ruled by the Congress(I) was expected to raise a minimum of rupees one lakh, while a legislator was to raise Rs 10,000 or so. Quotas were fixed for



Traditional fishermen in country-boats preventing trawlers from sailing out: battle for survival

borrowed, mortgaged and pawned to purchase a trawler at about Rs. five lakhs per boat. The ban will starve them." John also pointed out that the traditional fishermen cannot make the most of the prawn harvest, as only trawlers can do it. The Nayanar government is thus caught between the devil and the deep sea on this issue.

Sreedhar Pillay/Trivandrum

The Harijan factor

The BSP wants a weak government at the Centre in order to be in a bargaining position

DELHI

Kanshi Ram, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader knows how to keep his suitors—the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal—guessing. The June 1988 parliamentary by-election at Allahabad demonstrated that even if he could not win, he could make the ruling party lose by taking a large chunk out of its traditional vote-bank comprising Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Since then, both the ruling party and the Opposition have been assiduously wooing him.

As the elections draw near, the BSP leader feels confident about the spotlight once again turning on him. Kanshi Ram explained to SUNDAY in Delhi the mechanics of his strategy. "The Congress had asked me to field Jang Bahadur Patel

from Allahabad in the hope that he, being a Kurmi, (one of the backward castes) would cut into V.P. Singh's potential vote-bank. V.P. Singh met me before the Allahabad poll and asked me not to field a Kurmi," recalled Kanshi Ram. "I told him that I thought he represented a feudal background. Nevertheless, I was willing to help him because at that juncture it was very important for the interests I represent to ensure that the Congress was defeated."

Having helped shatter the myth that the Congress(I) was invincible, the BSP leader is now working to shatter



Kanshi Ram: keeping options open

'defeated Congress(I) candidates' also. The state Congress(I) Committees were sent rectangular coupons, bearing the election symbol of the ruling party and the signatures of the Congress(I) president and the treasurer.

The response to the scheme has, however, been far from encouraging. The deadline has been extended twice in the last two months to the end of August. In the third week of July the president of the Bihar Pradesh Congress(I) committee (BPCC-I), Dr Jagannath Mishra, admitted laconically that only a couple of lakhs of rupees had been deposited till then.

The introduction of the scheme was justified by the AICC(I) on the ground that it would prompt Congressmen to approach people, and that this 'mass contact' programme would help the party to gear up for the elections. What has actually happened, however, is that most ministers and legislators who have responded to the scheme so far, have taken the easy way out of collecting money from contractors and other favour-seekers.

The circulars issued by the AICC(I) and the BPCC(I) have now provided a sort of legitimacy to an activity which used to be carried out under cover and there is no knowing how much the ruling Congressmen have actually collected.

The AICC(I) itself does not seem unduly perturbed by the lukewarm response the scheme has attracted in the Hindi belt. According to its assessment, the scheme is expected to net Rs/ 15 crores, which is only a fraction of what the party would be spending in the next general elections. No wonder many Congressmen have got the impression that the scheme was actually meant to provide them with a face-saving device for making money. Strangely, not all partymen seem to be aware of the scheme. Former chief minister Bhagwat Jha Azad told SUNDAY, "I have received neither the circular nor the coupons." Another ruling party MLA admitted that collecting Rs 10,000 was beyond his ability. "Even if I receive the directive formally, I doubt if I can raise the money," he said.

Jalshankar Gupta/Patna

another. He says, "We know we are in a position to trim both the Congress and the Opposition. We want neither the Congress nor the National Front to get more than 200 seats. If we cannot form the government by 1990, we should form it by 1991 or 1992. And that can only happen if you have an unstable government at the Centre." The BSP plans to field 500 candidates in the forthcoming polls and contest all the seats in the crucial Hindi belt as well as in West Bengal, where the party has gained the support of a significant chunk of the backward castes.

"If we want to defeat the Congress(I), we will have to field candidates who are capable of cutting into its traditional vote-bank," says Kanshi Ram. "We can also tilt the balance against the Opposition by our choice of candidates. If we are not in the picture at all, the Opposition will be no match for the Congress," Kanshi Ram adds. But what will he do? That is for the Congress(I) and the Dal to guess?

Patralekha Chatterjee/New Delhi

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

With colour and sound

In just four years, Videocon has muscled its way to the top of the consumer electronics market

The Dhoots like to think big, best—and innovatively. In just four years, Videocon International, the company promoted by them, has grabbed a 10 per cent share of the Rs 2,400-crore consumer electronics market. In a market characterised by cut-throat competition, where many a new entrant has come off badly bruised, and erstwhile leaders have fallen by the wayside, that is saying something. And more than market share it is a matter of image. "If it's entertainment electronics, it's got to be Videocon." This is not an empty claim made by Pradip Kumar Dhoot, the 29-year-old marketing wizard of the family enterprise. For, Nandalal Dhoot and his three sons, with their sheer marketing sense and a feel of

the middle class psychology, have catapulted themselves to a premier position in the world of home electronics and gadgets.

The competitive spirit is evident when Pradip Kumar says, "We are at a growing stage and would not like our competitors to know what is happening at Videocon." And only recently, Videocon was involved in a fierce advertising battle with

Bangalore-based BPL Ltd over the issue of who was the leader of the television market. Videocon made a name with its innovative state-of-the-art colour TV sets and there was no way it could take a beating in the media columns. But Pradip Kumar admits that being in a backward area "gave us a financial upperhand over our city-based competitors". Videocon International Ltd is headquar-



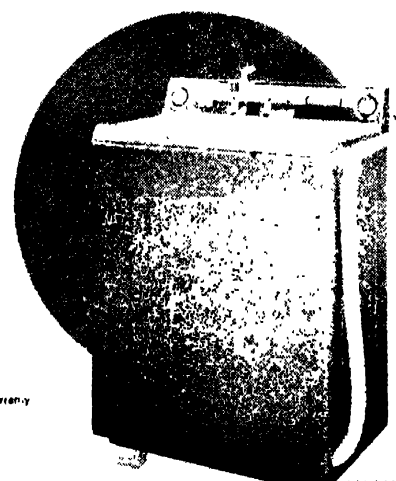
THE KING STANDS APART.

VIDEOCON

**Having got a
stranglehold on the
huge colour TV
market, Videocon
began its
diversification spree.
Last month it entered
the market for audio
electronics**

**VIDEOCON Presents
an International favourite**

Japan's No.1 Washing Machine



Two years warranty

tered at Chitegaon, 15 km from the tourist town of Aurangabad. Besides the incentives of operating from a backward region, its advertising cost is 2.5 per cent of its turnover and marketing expenses account for less than 2 per cent. But the Dhoots are quick to point out that the pay-scales of its employees compare with the best companies in the region.

The beginnings were humble. Prior to 1984, the family was into manufacturing and assembling of items like fan regulators and light systems for other companies. Their main business was the sales agency for Bajaj scooters which gave them a turnover of Rs 32 crores.



**(From far left)
Nandalal Dhoot;
Videocon's
electronics range;and
Pradeep Kumar
Dhoot: success story**

**A CLOSE LOOK
AT THESE
EXCELLENT
FEATURES.**



NOW, WHAT'S MISSING?

We are looking for the missing figure
 to solve for x .
 After reading the problem, we can see
 that the sum of the numbers is 100.
 Therefore,

VIDEOCON HOME AUDIO SYSTEMS

Having got a stranglehold on the huge colour TV segment which accounts for 38 per cent of the consumer electronics market, Videocon International began its diversification spree. First came the

The Dhoots have proved that small is the leader. But they are preparing to go big with a Rs 300-crore expansion programme

But it is in home audio systems that Videocon is poised to storm the market. Says Pradip Kumar, "The available hi-fi systems were quite cumbersome and expensive. With Toshiba of Japan, we have designed an integrated system including a record player, double cassette player, speakers and a radio. It has been packaged at Rs 6,470, and nobody can match us at this price, not even Philips." And the long waiting list for its integrated sound system is sufficient indication that the audio market is far from saturated.

If marketing strategy is of essence, then Videocon seems to believe in "guerrilla" tactics: pricing its new products 10 to 15 per cent lower than that

The next market that the Dhoots are trying to muscle their way into is VCRs, worth 30,000 sets a month according to estimates, and it will be a four-cornered race: Videocon-Toshiba, Kalyani Sharp, BPL-Sanyo and the public sector ET&T. It made a formal launch of its Slimline VCR early this month and claims to have sold 850 sets on a single day in Bombay, Nagpur, Aurangabad, and Kolhapur, the initial market launch territory. As Pradip Kumar Dhoot says, "What you choose to make is half the success story." Priced at around Rs 14,000 and incorporating innovative features, the Slimline is likely to give a run for their money to its competitors.

The Dhoots have proved that small is the leader. But now they are preparing to go big with a Rs 300-crore expansion programme over the next two years. The product range—besides TVs, VCRs, washing machines and audio systems—will include refrigerators priced at around Rs 3,500, mixers, juicers and compressors. By 1990, Videocon hopes to put out a fully automated washing machine—at a mere Rs 6,700. For the Dhoots and Videocon, it is already a world far removed from fan regulators and selling scooters.

Olga Tells/Bombay

TOOTHPASTES

The cost of a brushful

Not all toothpaste brands give the same value for money

you are getting from your tube of toothpaste? Of course, you know what a tube of toothpaste costs, but suppose you were to look at it from the angle of the price of each brushful? To put it differently, what are you paying each

How many brushfuls to a tube?

50 gm 100 gm 200 gm

38 66 130

Colgate

45 89 —

Close-up

38 72 97

Promise

28 58 —

Signal

38 79 114

Forhan's

CHART BY SANTOSH DUTTA

time you brush your teeth and which toothpaste gives you the best value for money?

This is the stuff of which consumer protection is made. The Consumer Protection Council of Tamil Nadu which has probed these aspects, has come up with some startling findings, one of which is that the cost of brushing your teeth once can differ by as much as six paise, depending on which brand of toothpaste you use.

The Consumer Protection Council, with its headquarters in Trichy, found that if a 50 gm tube of toothpaste is used, the cost per brushful is 12.5 paise in the case of Promise, and 18.1 paise in the case of Signal toothpaste. The council's study further showed that with a 50 gm tube of Close-Up you can load your toothbrush 45 times before the tube is exhausted. A 50 gm tube of Signal, on the other hand, gives only 28 brushfuls. Tubes of Colgate, Promise and Forhans of the same weight, each give 38 brushfuls.

According to S. Pushpavanam, found-

er-secretary of the council and a professor of English at the National College in Trichy, "The aim of the survey was to know how many standardised brushfuls a tube of toothpaste gives and the unit price of toothpaste per brushful." He adds: "As there is not much qualitative difference in the available toothpastes, except perhaps fanciful personal preferences, we felt the data would throw light on the value we get for the money we pay for the toothpaste. Also, of late, misleading advertisements have been appearing about the number of brushfuls a consumer gets from a tube."

The quantitative parameters of five common brands were measured on 18 February this year by the council, in collaboration with the mathematics students of the Seethalakshmi Ramaswamy College of Trichy. Describing the

You know what a tube of toothpaste costs, but suppose you were to look at it from the angle of the price of each brushful? To put it differently, what are you paying each time you brush your teeth?

methodology, Pushpavanam says, "The volunteers were trained in pushing out standardised brushfuls and in standardised exhaustion norms, that is, squeezing out the tube fully." He further explains: "Five brands of toothpaste were selected and then 50 gm, 100 gm and, where available, 200 gm tubes bought for each brand and then exhausted as per the norms."

The study showed that the 50 gm tube of Promise gave the consumer the best value for money in terms of brushfuls and Signal the lowest. Among the 100 gm tubes, Forhans at 11 paise per brushful gave the highest value while Signal, again, gave the least—17 paise.

Since 100 gm is double of 50 gm, one would normally expect twice the number of brushfuls from a 100 gm tube than from a 50 gm one. Surprisingly, where toothpastes are concerned, simple arithmetic does not apply. It was found that a

The cost every time you brush your teeth

(50 gm toothpaste tube)

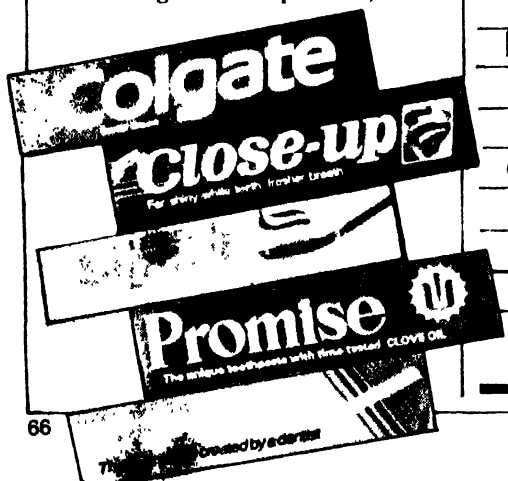
	Price (Rs)	Cost per squeeze (paise)
Colgate	5.00	13.1
Close-Up	6.50	14.4
Promise	4.75	12.5
Forhans	4.90	12.8
Signal	5.25	18.1

CHART BY SANTOSH DUTTA

50 gm tube of Colgate gave 38 brushfuls, while only 66 brushfuls can be squeezed from the 100 gm tube. At the other extreme a 50 gm tube of Forhans gave 38 brushfuls and a 100 gm tube 79, which is more than double. The Consumer Protection Council survey made another interesting observation: the figures are averages. If single tubes of toothpaste are compared, the variation between tubes of the same brand and the same weight was upto 15 brushfuls. This, says Pushpavanam, was particularly true of Colgate.

Caveat emptor—let the buyer beware—is an outmoded, indeed anti-social, concept in the developed countries. In India, the consumer still has to be extremely wary. Or else, warns Pushpavanam, there will be a steady drain on his wallet, as the toothpaste survey shows in a small instance.

R. Vijayaraghavan/Madras



SUPERMARKETS

The stylish bazaars

A string of classy supermarkets is revolutionising retailing concepts in Bombay

It's time for the friendly neighbourhood *bania*—the man on whom you have always depended for everything from provisions and groceries to toiletries and even the odd gift item—to make way. And for the more discerning consumer, there were the cooperatives like the Sahakar Bazar, Sahakar Bhandar and the Apna Bazar where one was assured of quality products at competitive prices. Now, the supermarkets have arrived to revolutionise the very concept of retailing—and shopping.

Among the first to open shop was Foodland's at Juhu in north-west Bombay. Says R.B. Chand, manager, Foodland's: "There was a tremendous response from the people. Primarily because they no longer had to visit the filthy markets, prices were competitive and they were exposed to a wide variety of products." Not to mention it offered a congenial shopping atmosphere. Gone were the days when one had to sweat it out in the fish market, haggling over the price and, perhaps, finally settling for something that could well turn out to be a bad bargain.

Before long, the people in the suburbs had discovered the thrill of hassle-free shopping: they could get all their daily requirements under one roof and, consequently, the cash registers at Foodland's kept ringing incessantly. Today, a

year after Raju Shete started Foodland's, the supermarket caters to 900 to 1,000 customers a day, with daily sales averaging Rs 1.5 lakhs.

Inspired by the success of Foodland's, other entrepreneurs too jumped in the fray and in October last, the KD's Superstore opened its doors to the people, in Four Bungalows, Andheri. Virendra Doshi, the managing director of KD's, and the moving force behind it, set about with missionary zeal to change the shopping habits of the people. Gift schemes were introduced and attractive

KD's Superstore: innovative retailing schemes



The Garwares supermarket: aiming for the rich clientele



prizes offered; and to induce housewives to give up their afternoon nap, KD's launched the 'happy hours' scheme between 1 and 5 pm when shoppers were given special discounts. As Doshi says, "Every new concept needs promotion," and the hard-sell worked wonders for them.

That wasn't all. In a bid to draw the customers away from the popular Apna Bazar, Doshi ensured that the prices of the goods offered at KD's were as competitive and, sometimes, even lower. Doshi, obviously, is very pleased about the way things have turned out—with monthly sales averaging Rs 25 lakhs, he has no cause for complaint. And far from being worried about the competition, he maintains, "The entire concept of supermarkets is a very healthy one. The more the supermarkets, the better the service. With each one striving to outdo the others in performance, the customer will be guaranteed only the best."

And there seems to be plenty of competition in store. The Garwares, who will open their supermarket this week, of course, have ensured that they have an access to the rich and super-rich clientele by locating their supermarket at Warden Road. Jaideep Garware, chairman, Garware Supermarket Pvt. Ltd, makes no bones about it when he says, "We selected Warden Road because we wanted to tap the resources that were available—a high population density and spending power." It's little wonder then that the Garwares supermarket will stock, besides the usual range of branded and unbranded products (nearly 15,000 products will be put on display), exotic varieties of cheeses, asparagus, broccoli, Chinese vegetables that one may rarely come across at the vegetable vendor's. The

Garwares are also relying on a super-efficient customer service system, by which laser scanners will help tot up bills in a matter of seconds, to keep the customers happy and asking for more.

The secret of the success of a supermarket, however, depends not on the spending power of the people but on one golden rule: low margins, high volumes. Says David Menezes of Super Consultants, who is at present, helping to set up the Rs 8-crore Goradia Supermarket project at Vile Parle, "Supermarkets and low prices should be synonymous with each other. That is the way things are in the West and that's how it should be here." Menezes, who has been involved in the establishment of Foodland's and Garware's and has been appointed consultant to three other such projects, feels that cooperatives will soon be out of business if the supermarket culture catches on.



Foodland's: setting the trend

Says Menezes, "So far people have been forced to go to Sahakar Bhandars because they had no choice. But now, with the emphasis on hygiene, amenable shopping conditions, lower prices and quicker service, I can foresee that Sahakar Bhandar will soon be out of business." And it is Goradia's that is likely to steal a march over the other supermarkets, primarily because of the huge space—17,000 sq ft—that it will be situated on. He is confident that Goradia's daily sales will touch the Rs 10-lakh mark.

Ambitious though the figure may be, it's for Menezes and his partner, Lalwani, to live up to this claim. For, not only are they providing consultancy services but are responsible for practically running the show. Right from preparing the feasibility reports to deciding on the product-mix, choosing the appropriate kinds of storage facilities, and estab-

Supermarkets have arrived to revolutionise the very concept of retailing—and shopping...And the success of a supermarket depends not on the spending power of the people but on one golden rule: low margins, high volumes

lishing a smooth-running supplier network, Super Consultants is in charge of the entire operation. Says Menezes, "The general belief is that supermarkets are high on investments and low on profits. But we guarantee investors a profit margin of 10 per cent."

No wonder then that Super Consultants has been approached by several businessmen to set up supermarkets: a Rs 3-crore project by the Lakdavalas should be ready to open its doors in January 1990; another Rs 5-crore project at S.V. Road, Borivli, Sunder's, is nearing completion; and the one at Khar, Jain's, will open in January next year. Besides, India Safety Valves is proposing to set up a supermarket at Cuffe Parade. With business booming, it's not just the investors who are in for a super time but also the shopper who is beginning to realise that the neighbourhood *bania* is not so friendly after all.

Aditya Chatterjee/Bombay

INSURANCE

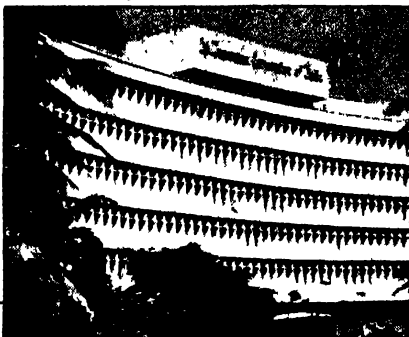
Going offshore

LIC launches a subsidiary in the Gulf

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has now gone abroad. On 22 June, LIC's first offshore branch office was inaugurated in Bahrain by minister of state for finance Eduardo Faleiro and Bahrain's commerce minister Habib Gassim. Life Insurance Corporation (International) E.C., set up in collaboration with the Bahrain-based International Agencies Company Ltd, will offer tailor-made life insurance policies for expatriate Indians working in the island and in neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

Says an LIC spokesman, "There are about 80,000 expatriate Indians in Bahrain alone. We hope to spread the message of life insurance in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and then move on to other Gulf countries like Kuwait, Qatar and Doha." The edge that LIC has over numerous insurance companies operat-

The LIC headquarters in Bombay



ing in the Gulf is the 'transferability clause': the policy holder has a choice of taking out policies in US dollars, the local currency or in the Indian rupee. And, policies can be transferred to any of LIC's 1,400-odd branches in India on the policy holder's return.

There is also the option of premium selling. Says the spokesman, "This is a facility to keep the life cover in force without interruption. Under this scheme the policy holder pays a bulk amount in lieu of all or part of future premiums and the company takes on the responsibility of keeping the policy in force for the agreed period."

Despite the competition from renowned international insurance chains—American Life Insurance and Eagle Star in particular—LIC (International) is confident of holding its own. "We hope to sell 2,000 policies in the first year of operations in Bahrain. And if our preliminary studies are correct, we can easily sell over 5,000 policies in the first year in Saudi Arabia too," claim confident LIC officials.

The modest targets notwithstanding, the effort for the present is all-out. And it will only be a matter of months before the success of LIC's international foray is known.

Debjani Sinha/Bombay

Wooing the class of '89

It's that time of the year again. More than 5,000 Indian graduates will head westwards in the next few weeks, in search of a bright future. And the airlines will rake in the profits for flying them to North America. But this year, they plan to go about their business more aggressively. Air Canada, British Airways and Lufthansa—Air-India is not a popular choice for the students—are daily touting the advantages of their respective networks aimed at the student traffic. Lufthansa has gone a step further to entice them—especially the less well-heeled scholarship students. It is offering special one-way fares for students, clipping Rs 7,000 off the regular one-way fare of Rs 18,000 plus. (The US government last year disallowed student discount fares, but airlines have found a loophole by offering students these "apex" fares which are normally offered to other passengers.) Students have finally earned a separate slot as an airline marketing segment, after summer holiday-makers, Gujarati and Punjabi businessmen, and non-

resident Indians. Just read the Lufthansa flyer for students, and you will get an idea why airlines are scrambling to hook them: "...From Kashmir to Kanyakumari—from every corner of the Indian subcontinent, graduates of the class of 1989 will head for campuses abroad...almost 90 per cent to the US and Canada..." And with a market spread like that, India's loss is the airlines' gain.

Modis take charge

The nitty-gitty of Computer Point's take-over by the B.K. Modi group is finally over. Rajan Kohli, chief executive of Modi Business Machines, has been appointed chairman of Computer Point in place of the company's original promoter, B.M. Ghia. And the change of guard could not have come at a better time for the Modis, for Modi-Olivetti is expecting to hit the market sometime this month with the latest Olivetti products. Computer Point, with its 16 outlets all over the country, will provide a tailor-made access to the Rs 500-crore computer market giving the Modis an edge over their competitors. Already, it is learnt, Computer Point has

Computer Point, Calcutta

decided to stop retailing Wipro computer products, the strongest competitors for the Modi-Olivetti range.

Brealey keeps his word

The white hope for West Bengal's jute industry may not be a white hoax after all. Just when industry circles were speculating whether R.J. Brealey, the Scottish businessman, would ultimately keep his promise of turning round Titagur Jute Factory, or turn out to be a front-man for the owners, the Mehta family, reports have trickled in that he has started to remit funds from the UK for meeting working



capital requirements. Of course, Brealey's bid to take over the jute factory from the Mehtas is caught up in legal wrangles, and till they are disposed of, the revival package he claims to have worked out cannot be put into operation. But, then, the intentions are right, and the hapless workers of the ailing mills can hope for better days soon.



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Thus, ensuring that the rewards of excellence continue to flow ... long into the future.



APOLLO TYRES

LEADERSHIP THROUGH QUALITY

Canopy of contention

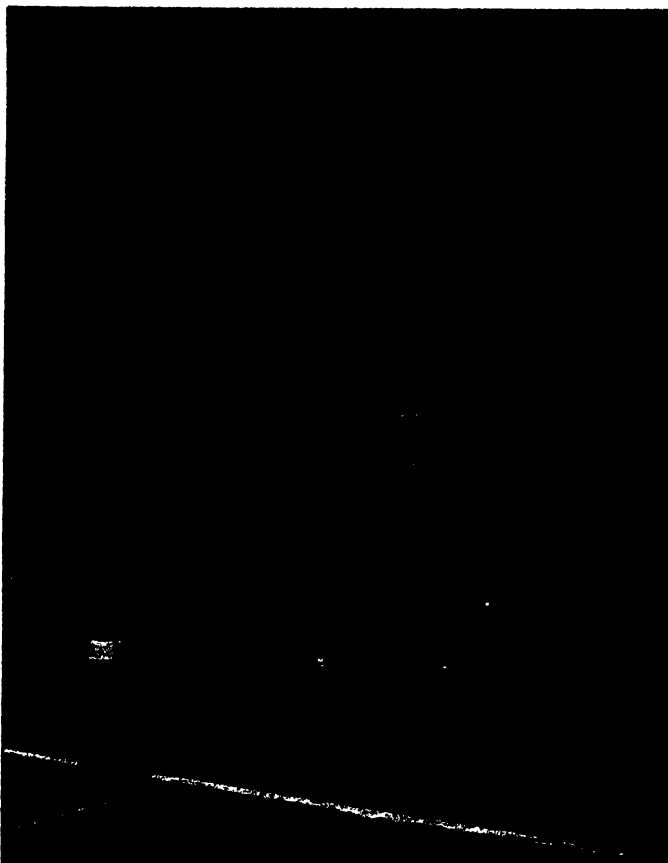
The government's proposal to demolish the historical sandstone chhatra near India Gate leads to a storm

Forty years after Independence it seems strange that anybody should feel threatened by imperial architecture. Especially since the country today is being ruled from within the portals that once epitomised the strength of the British empire, and the President's residence is the old viceregal lodge. For a month now, there has been a raging controversy about the government's intention to demolish the pink sandstone *chhatra* (canopy) that forms an integral part of New Delhi's imposing central vista. The ministry of urban development has suddenly woken up to the fact that the capital lacks a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in a prominent place, and efforts are being made to rectify this before the elections.

It was Indira Gandhi who commissioned the eminent sculptor, Ram Sutar, to execute a bronze figure of the Mahatma, to occupy the canopy which once sheltered a statue of King George V. About 20 years ago, the imperial statue was relegated to the coronation park on the city's outskirts. And the *chhatra* has remained unoccupied since. The *chhatra* is an elegant structure, embellished by cascading water and upturned seashells, surrounded by manicured lawns. When Lutyens, the empire's master architect, designed the *chhatra*, he intended that the monarch on a mount should be able to look through the grand arch of India Gate and see the Viceroy holding court.

According to Sayed Shafi, former chief town planner of Delhi, the central vista is one of the finest ever created by a city planner. As it embodied the seat of imperial power, it would be incongruous to have a meditating Mahatma sitting in the midst of today's heavy traffic and hordes of holiday-makers.

Habib Rahman, former chief architect of the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), associated with the Gandhi



The sandstone canopy at New Delhi's central vista: Imperial hang-up?

statue project for 20 years, calls the proposal to demolish the canopy a "sacrilege", as it would destroy the harmony and design of the India Gate complex. In a letter to the Prime Minister's Office in December 1987, Rahman pointed out that the canopy was part of the country's national heritage and its dismantling was bound to reflect badly on the Indian government.

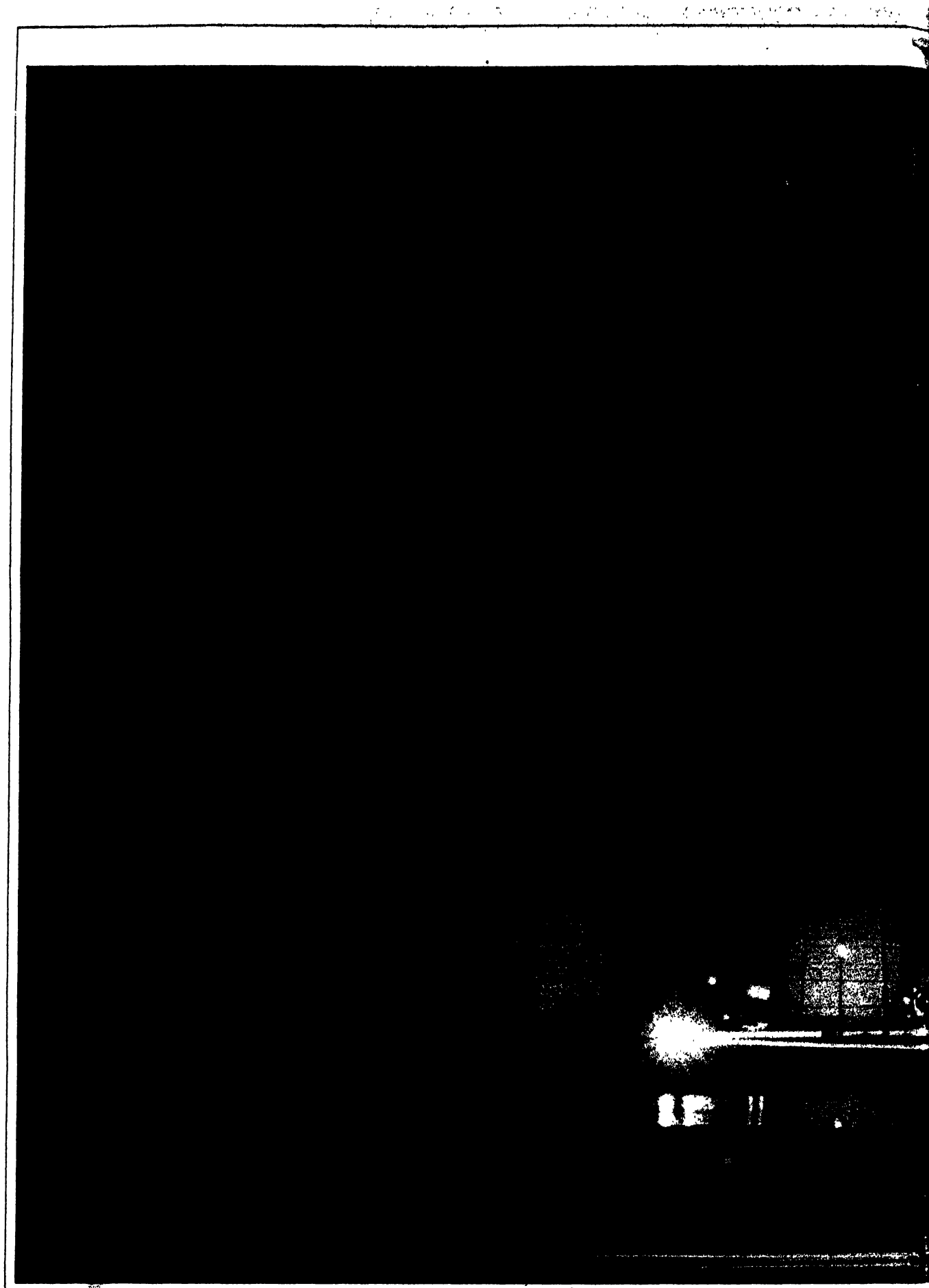
Town planners, architects, conservationists and other concerned citizens have all taken up the cudgels for the *chhatra* issue. Some want to see the sandstone canopy saved at all costs, with or without the Mahatma installed beneath it. Others feel that the structure should be allowed to remain unchanged as it fits beautifully into the arch of the India Gate. But the decision-makers (spurred on by the Prime Minister's sudden urge to see the task that his mother began, accomplished) have re-

mained oblivious to such protests. "Why are we all so afraid of change?" asks a highly placed official in the CPWD, assigned with the execution of the project. "We have to change with the times, and people will get used to not having a canopy there once it is gone."

Not bargaining for the public outrage that this two-decade old issue has suddenly raised, the ministry of urban development, as well as the Delhi Urban Commission, is maintaining an ominous silence on the subject. Asked in Parliament if the statue was going to be put up, the minister of state for urban development, Dalbir Singh, announced that the statue would be installed by October. CPWD officials, however, think the deadline is unrealistic as the statue is still being cast, and is unlikely to be ready so soon. "The end of this year is a more likely date," remarks an official ambiguously.

The first official statement against the installation of the Gandhi statue at India Gate came from Pupul Jayakar, cultural adviser to the Prime Minister and chairperson of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH): "The idea of the Mahatma facing the tanks and soldiers of the Republic Day parade is grotesque," she said. Martand Singh of INTACH felt that "the empty space under the canopy symbolises in perpetuity the removal of imperial and oligarchical power from India. It is the celebration of the people of India". This view has been communicated to the Prime Minister, who, according to sources, is "very upset" that there should be a hue and cry about an issue that has been hanging fire, and about which he has already taken a decision.

A string of articles in the press have condemned the removal of the *chhatra*. The public service organisation, Common Cause, has also mobilised a signa-



ture campaign and are debating whether to take the matter to court. The Delhi Conservation Society is gathering all the support it can to save the monument. "A city's architectural heritage is enriched by addition, not by destruction and substitution," maintains Narayani Gupta, former president of the society and reader of history at Jamia Millia Islamia. Gupta, whose specialisation is the history of Delhi city calls the move to

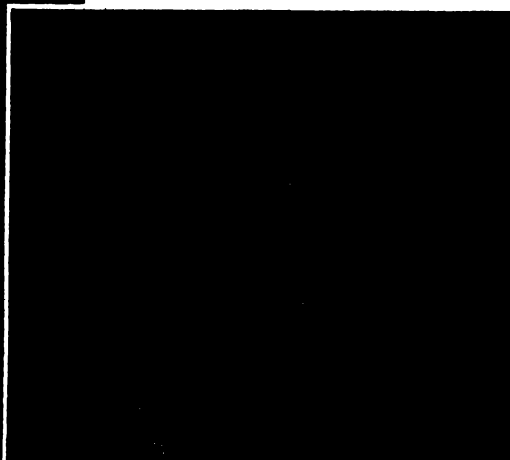
demolish the *chhatra* "sheer vandalism" and explains that when Lutyens designed Delhi, he integrated architectural vestiges of earlier Delhi into his road layout. "Only the philistine and ignorant would fail to appreciate the total integrated harmony of light and dark sandstone and of grass and water. What sanctity was there in the declaration of the central vista as a conservation zone if this is what was allowed to happen?" asks an irate Gupta.

Sources in the urban development ministry say that those who have expedited the decision fear that if they delay till after the elections and if there is a new government, some "lesser Gandhi" may occupy the hallowed spot. "It was the will of Indiraji, and we shall do it," said an official. "Nobody can doubt the good workmanship of the statue," claimed a CPWD official defending the move. "Of course, there is the fear that one fine morning, depending on the government, somebody will put any statue they wish to over there."

Sculptor Ram Sutar confirms that the statue was commissioned by the late Prime Minister to fit into the imperial canopy. The statue, which is four-and-a-quarter times lifesize, has been designed to occupy the *chhatra*, so there is no real need to knock it down, even if the powers that be insist on Gandhiji being there. According to Rahman, the *chhatra* is not imperial but Rajasthani in its design. His main objection to Gandhiji being seated under it is that the spot is highly congested with traffic. The architect has suggested that the road from India Gate to the National Museum be blocked off (there is barely any traffic on it) and converted into a garden to house the statue. An alternate suggestion is to place the statue at Birla House on Tees January Marg, where Mahatma Gandhi fell to an assassin's bullet.

While the press has been accused of misunderstanding the issue, nobody has so far expressed strong views in favour of destroying the *chhatra*. Meanwhile, protestors are hell-bent on not allowing a part of their city to be ravaged by a bulldozer. "We'll all hold hands around the monument and not allow them to demolish it," swears Gupta. At the India Gate lawns, few visitors even know about the controversy. "Does it make such a difference?" shrugs a youth who jogs past the monument every morning but has never really noticed it. Fortunately, there are a lot of concerned people who think it does, and they won't let the *chhatra* fall if they can help it.

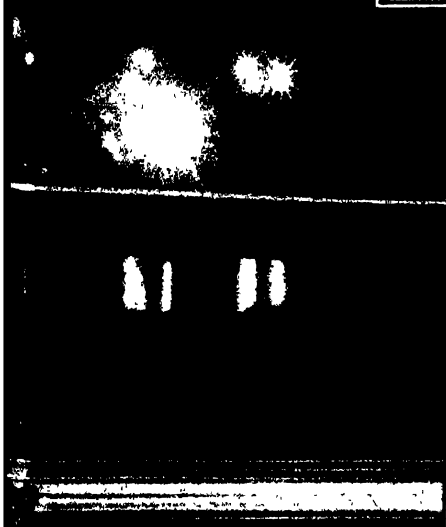
Shiraz Siddiqui/New Delhi



Indira Gandhi: began it all



Rajiv Gandhi: upset at the hue and cry



Player vs establishment

The Indian cricket team comes in for severe punishment from the BCCI

When Indian captain Dilip Vengsarkar was banned from playing both at the domestic and international levels for a six-month period last year, it appeared as if he had received the cricketer's equivalent of the death sentence. But the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) obviously believes that punishment can be even more severe. Last week, the disciplinary committee appointed by the Board stunned the cricket-loving public by coming down hard on virtually the whole Indian Test cricket team. The provocation was the decision of the cricketers to play in the USA and Canada in contravention of the Board's directive. The retribution was severe: six top-ranking cricketers were banned from the game for a year and another six were slapped heavy fines and threatened with a similar measure if they failed to pay. Two more await judgment.

The decision of the disciplinary committee—comprising Board president B.N. Dutt, honorary secretary Ranbir Singh, P.M. Rungta, M. Mantri, A.W. Kanmadikar and I.S. Bindra—came like a bolt from the blue. Indian captain Dilip Vengsarkar, former captains Kapil Dev and Ravi Shastri, Hyderabad's Mohammad Azharuddin, Bengal's Arun Lal and plucky wicket-keeper Kiran More, were those who earned the stiffest penalties. They were banned from both the domestic and international game for a year and a balance payment of Rs 35,000 each that was due to them (for playing in the recent West Indies tour) was withheld.

Never in the history of Indian cricket has such severe punishment been meted out. In retrospect, the ban imposed on Vengsarkar last year seemed mild in comparison. The six months that Vengsarkar sat out, for writing a syndicated column during a Test series, didn't rob him of much cricket. But this one—

scheduled to expire on 6 August, 1990—is far more savage. Apart from missing out on the trips to Sharjah, Pakistan, New Zealand and England, the six cricketers will also have to give the much-publicised Nehru Cup limited-overs tournament in New Delhi a go-by. Missing such competition at this stage of their careers could be an irrevocable

(From left) Kapil Dev, Ravi Shastri and Dilip Vengsarkar will not only miss out on a lot of cricket but they also stand to lose a lot of money



The decision of the disciplinary committee came like a bolt from the blue. Never in the history of Indian cricket has such severe punishment been meted out to players



setback for some of them. Moreover, they also stand to lose a lot of money as most of them are certain for the team.

In comparison, the six others—Sanjeev Sharma, Ajay Sharma, Narendra Hirwani, Sanjay Manjrekar, Robin Singh and M. Venkatramana—may have got off lightly. But the punishment they

received was by no means slight. The disciplinary committee fined them Rs 15,000 each and made it clear that they would be allowed to play cricket only if the sum was deposited with the Board before 14 September. Like the former six, their balance payments for the West Indies tour were also withheld. Two others—medium pacer Chetan Sharma and off-spinner Arshab Ayub, who are currently playing County cricket in England—were given time till mid-September to appear before the committee if they wanted to acquit themselves.

The decision about how to punish them will depend on the explanations they give.

The problems as the cricket establishment sees it began during the recent West Indies tour, when the Indian team was receiving a severe drubbing. It was then that the Board learnt of their plans to go to the US and Canada. It dashed off a message

to the players refusing them permission to visit these countries and demanding that they return home from the West Indies together. But it was already too late. The cricketers—who were making the detour to play a series of exhibition matches for which they were highly paid—couldn't back out from their commitments. They sent a message back to the Board requesting that its decision be reconsidered. And then, without waiting to have the matter sorted out, left for cricket's 'new world'.

After playing matches in the USA and Canada, the players returned to India. While some of the cricketers apologised for making the trip, all of them jointly sent a letter to the Board explaining the reasons for their actions. The cricketers wrote to say that they had no intentions of defying the Board, but they went ahead with the tour since they were under the impression that the BCCI would in any case give them the permission later.

But the Board was not to be placated.

All the guilty players were asked to report to the disciplinary committee in Bombay where they had to answer the following questions:

- whether they had signed a contract with the Board before leaving for the West Indies tour;
- whether there was any contract signed between the players and the organisers of the matches in America;
- the amount the players received from the organisers of the matches in America and Canada; and,
- whether the players received letters from the Board refusing them permission to play in America and Canada.

After receiving the replies from the cricketers, the disciplinary committee passed its judgement. But how is one to explain the committee's decision to come down so heavily on just six players while letting off the rest with just a fine? The Board obviously felt that a 'rebel' tour of this nature couldn't have come off without the active interest of senior players like Kapil Dev, Dilip Vengsarkar and Ravi Shastri. As for Arun Lal, Azharuddin and Kiran More, they were axed simply because they were very close to the senior rebels.

The decision came as a bolt from the blue for the cricketers. Never in their wildest dreams did they anticipate such a harsh penalty from the Board. What is more, Board president Bishwanath Dutt and company have made it almost obvious to the players that the decision of the disciplinary committee would not require the ratification of the working committee of the BCCI. Said P.M. Rungta, a member of the disciplinary committee, "The working committee cannot alter our decision but it can consider appeals by the players."

Faced with an unrelenting Board and the prospect of missing out on a lot of cricket, the banned players resorted to what was perhaps the last weapon in their armoury: garner public support for their cause. At a crowded press conference in Bombay held soon after the ban was imposed Kapil Dev and company appealed to the Board to reconsider the decision. Citing earlier instances when Indian teams had played exhibition matches after official Test tours and got away scot-free, the players argued that they went ahead with the US and Canadian trips as they were certain that the establishment would give them the permission later. Pointing out that such instances have gone unpunished in the past, Kapil Dev said: "For the last ten years, there have been violations of the contract but this is the first time the Board has come out like this. This is the



Is Gavaskar the villain?

The banned cricketers blame the Little Master for their plight



With the BCCI taking a hard line and the banned cricketers having run out of ideas to defend themselves, the players are looking for a scapegoat. The rebels are now arguing that the entire episode was engineered by Sunil Gavaskar. Kapil Dev has even gone on record saying that they would never have gone ahead with the US and Canada tours had Gavaskar not assured them that he would persuade the Board to give them permission.

In fact, there are many others who feel that Gavaskar is to be blamed for the plight of the banned cricketers. For, the trips to the US and Canada were finalised only after the former Test star joined the Indian contingent at Port of Spain where the third Test was being played. What is more, it has now been revealed that most of the players got their US visas from the US high commission in the West Indies.

Gavaskar, of course, denies that he is the villain of the drama. A few days after his name was dragged into

(Top) Gavaskar with Kapil and Shastri; (Inset) the Little Master: provoking the players?

the unseemly episode, the Little Master issued a statement saying that by the time he reached Port of Spain, all arrangements for an Indian XI versus West Indies XI match in New York were complete. All he did was to ask the Indian cricketers to play an additional match against an Imran XI team. "If, therefore, there is the notion floating around that I was the person who originally invited the banned cricketers to play in America and am thus responsible for the current state of affairs, then it is totally false," Gavaskar clarified.

What is perhaps more damaging for Sunil Gavaskar is the allegation that he had pocketed the profits from the matches the Indians played in the USA and Canada. Dilip Vengsarkar and his company have said that all they got was a meagre daily allowance of \$40 and hinted that it could be Gavaskar who actually "reaped the harvest".

bottom line. We now appeal to you to help us."

And, in an obvious effort to whip up public sentiment, Kapil Dev said that they were not ready to accept a stiff fine instead of the ban. "We wouldn't like to buy our way back. Cricket is much bigger than that," Kapil clarified.

All this while, one man was sitting on the sidelines and following the developments closely. For, he too was a party to the controversial tour but for some strange reasons, was not booked by the Board. According to the players, Srinivas Venkatraghavan, the manager of the Indian team for the West Indies tour, is also guilty as he was privy to all the plans of the players. In fact, Venkat even accompanied the Indians to the USA. Though Venkatraghavan's argument is that he went to America on a personal visit, the fact remains that he, in his capacity as the official representative of the Board, knew what was happening and, instead of dissuading the cricketers, went along with them to the USA.

Kapil Dev, of course, has to answer for more than just defying the Board's directive not to play in America and Canada. The plucky all-rounder also faces punishment for giving an interview to the press immediately after the West Indies tour as the contract which he had signed clearly says that no one except the captain can communicate with the media. However, Kapil can accuse the Board for harassing him if two of his colleagues, Sanjay Manjrekar and Navjot Singh Sidhu, get away scot free. For, both Manjrekar and Sidhu, too, gave extensive press interviews. Dilip Vengsarkar also gave a hard-hitting interview, but then as the skipper, he is entitled to air his views.

Will the one-year ban on the six leading cricketers really affect their careers? For Kapil Dev and Dilip Vengsarkar, sitting out for 12 crucial months could well prove disastrous. And, at 32, Arun Lal too will have a trying time to fight back into the Indian team after a year. A disturbed Kapil Dev said: "What will we do for a year? Forget about cricket? And how are we to maintain our physical fitness if we are not allowed to play?"

The others, of course, are still young and can afford not to play for a year. Ravi Shastri, Mohammed Azharuddin and Kiran More, however, will have to concentrate on keeping themselves fit. But all three will lose in terms of money as the year ahead is packed with cricket tournaments.

But the Board had much more in mind than just the careers of a few individuals



The banned players addressing a press conference: seeking public sympathy

when it decided to come down so heavily on the players. Over the last few years, the Board has been noticing the disturbing trend among cricketers to defy the establishment. Player power was becoming too great a threat for the Board to ignore any longer.

The BCCI working committee, which met in Bangalore to decide on the course of action against the rebel cricketers, was unanimous in the decision that the

time had come to discipline the players. And the BCCI went about its task in a most ruthless manner even after knowing that its action will provoke a reaction from the powerful cricketers.

There were other provocations too for the BCCI to get tough. At the International Cricket Conference (ICC), the Indian cricket authorities came in for sharp criticism from the US and Canadian boards for allowing a tour without

Kapil Dev: In a tight spot



Politics and cricket

Will the government mediate between the players and the Board?

The crime has been committed. The accused have been found guilty. And, the judgement passed. The cream of India's cricketing talent will be sitting on the sidelines as India participates in the Sharjah limited overs competition, tours Pakistan, New Zealand and England and, hosts the celebrated Nehru Centenary Cup cricket contest.

While it is expected that New Delhi's power-brokers will not interfere in the affairs of the BCCI, the Indian government is already worried



Sanjay Manjrekar: got away with a fine



Manager Venkatraghavan: guilty too?

For Kapil Dev, Vengsarkar and Arun Lal, sitting out for 12 crucial months could well prove disastrous. The rest, of course, are young and can afford not to play for a year. But they will have to keep themselves physically fit

their consent. The Philadelphia-based US Cricket Association's president, Nazeer Khan, denied that the US board had anything to do with the matches the Indians played in America. Said an angry Khan: "It was illegal. It should not have taken place. They (the Indian team) had no right to come to the US without our knowledge." The Canadian cricket authorities too are believed to be in agreement with the views of Khan.

that it will not be able to field the best team for the Nehru Cup. The tournament is being held as part of Jawaharlal Nehru's birth centenary celebrations and it is only expected that the government will go out of its way to make the contest a grand success. But with a couple of teams expressing their inability to participate due to prior engagements and England having no option but to send a weak side due to some of their top players deciding to play in South Africa, much of the tournament's glitz has already been rubbed off. Now, if India takes the field without the likes of Kapil Dev, Ravi Shastri and Mohammed Azharuddin, public interest in the contest is going to diminish further.

The question, under the circumstances, is: will the government, and more precisely, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, ask the sports ministry to mediate a truce between the guilty players and the Board?

Many believe that the BCCI wanted to prove to the ICC authorities that it is not an impotent body as is often made out to be.

But was the BCCI totally in the dark about the possibility of the Indian team touring the US and Canada? Not really, if one cares to go through the contract that the players signed before emplaning for the Caribbean. Clause 7 of the contract says: "The player shall not play cricket

for a period of one year from the date of agreement for any private promoter of the game or sign any contract to play cricket whatsoever with or for any private promoter or cricketer unrecognised by the Board or the ICC..." The next clause lays down the punishment for violating Clause 7: "In the event of the contravention of Clause 7, the player shall forfeit all monetary benefits of the tour...and shall be debarred from playing any cricket matches conducted or authorised by the Board or its affiliated associations."

Why should such a clause be incorporated in the contract if the Board had no inkling whatsoever that the Indian team had received invitations to play in America and Canada? And, if it did, why wasn't the issue sorted out before Vengsarkar and his team left for the Windies?

Whatever be the truth, the Board's action has put the cricketers—perhaps for the first time—on the defensive. Ruling out the possibility of a confrontation with the parent body, Kapil Dev said: "We are not thinking about legal action."

However, there are many others among those punished who do not share Kapil's views. Rumour has it that the disgruntled players have started contacting about 40 of the country's top players and checking out if they will agree to boycott the BCCI as a show of solidarity. In such an eventuality, the cricketers will continue to make more news off the field.

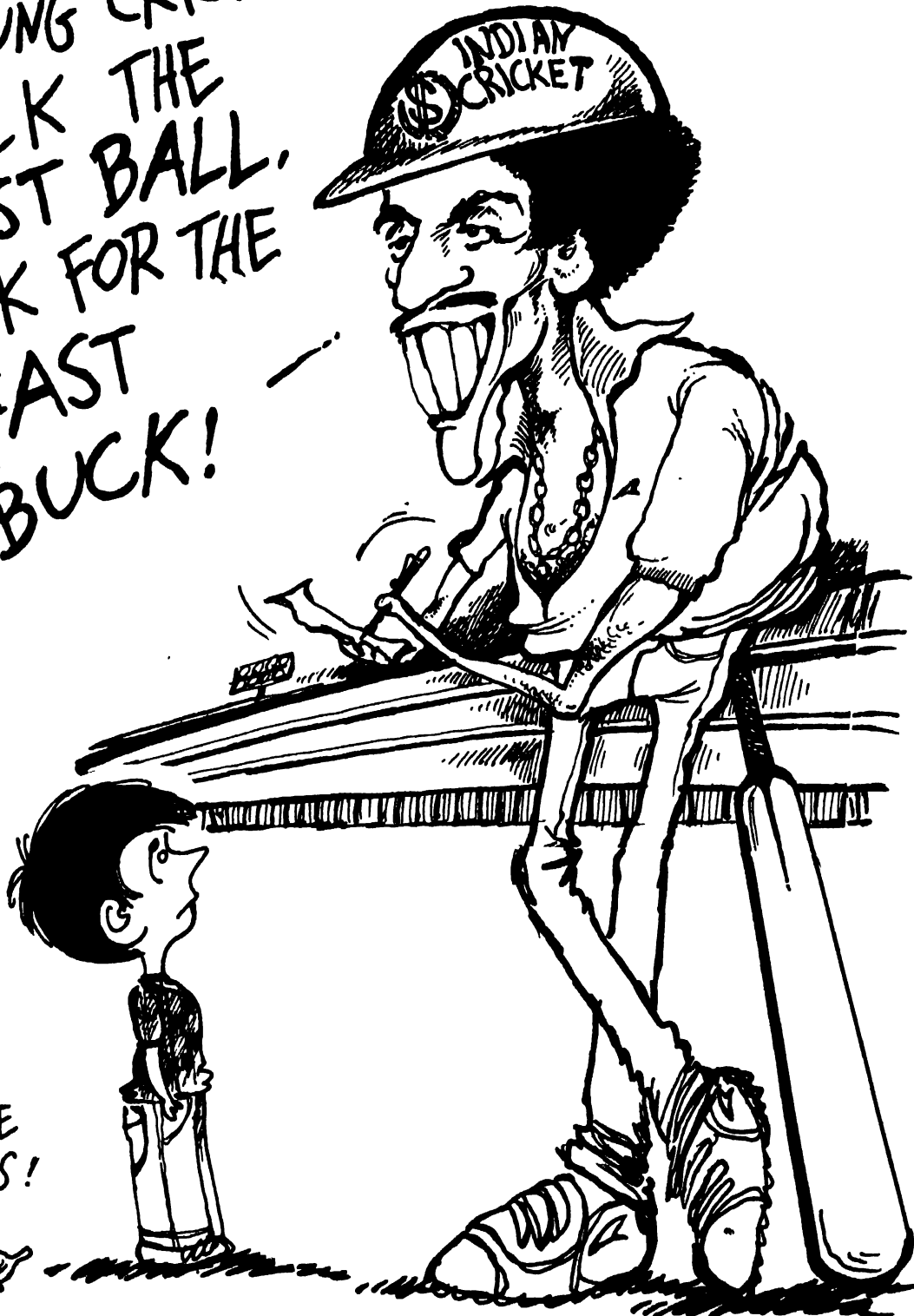
Pradeep Paul

Dilip Vengsarkar: perturbed



Ravi Shankar

MY ADVICE TO ALL
YOUNG CRICKETERS—
DUCK THE
FAST BALL.
LOOK FOR THE
FAST
BUCK!



AND
WHAM!
GONE
WITH THE
WINDIES!

In the industry, nobody takes kindly to being upstaged. What makes Sridevi special is that she does something about it.

It was Sri who ruled the roost with her *Nagina main tera dushman* number. Until Madhuri Dixit and *Ek do teen* captured the imagination of the nation. But it is going to be Sridevi once again after *Naaka Bandi* hits the scene. For, in one song in this film the actress has excelled herself and those who have seen the rushes haven't stopped talking about it.

What makes it so special anyway? Well, in the space of some three minutes Sridevi does take offs on no less than eight persons—Madhubala in *Howrah Bridge*, Asha Parekh in *Mera Gaon Mera*



Madhuri Dixit: upstaged?

Desh, Meena Kumari in *Pakeezah*, Sadhana in *Hum Dono*, Vyjayanthimala in *Tilak*, Mumtaz in *Brahmachari*, Zeenat Aman in *Qurbani* and, of all people, Amjad Khan in *Sholay* and Charlie Chaplin.

The song took some four days and all of Sri's considerable talent to picturise. But it will be worth its while if it gets her back where she (thinks she) belongs.

It's not just Sridevi who's on a mimicry trip. So is Anil Kapoor. (Whatever Ms India can do Mr India can do better. Right Anil?)

In Rakesh Roshan's *Kishan Kanhaiya*, Anil and lady love Madhuri play movie buffs. And before they begin



Anil Kapoor: following in Sridevi's footsteps

watching the next film, Anil dresses and behaves like the hero of the film they are about to see. All this in an attempt to win the heart of his lady love.

Strange are the ways of filmi courtships.

A little success is a dangerous thing. For starry



Rupa Ganguly: unprofessional

*nakhra*s are tolerated in Bombay only if they come from film stars. If up and coming starlets try the same tricks, more often than not they land on their pancaked faces.

Rupa Ganguly would do

well to learn this lesson, and learn it well. For the small screen success as Draupadi in *Mahabharat* and roles opposite Dev Anand in *Aman Ke Farishtey* and Jeetendra in *Do Bhai* have given her ideas above her station.

If fortune favours the brave it should come to Dharmendra's rescue at once. For what has the foolhardy and flat-footed Jat done but gone and performed a break dance in pet director Anil Sharma's



Sridevi: scene-stealing performance

Elaan-E-Jung. To make matters worse was the fact that he was dancing opposite none other than twinkle toes Jayaprada.

With luck, the sequence will pass off as a humble attempt at comedy and draw the crowds. For, after *Batwara*, Dharam's career needs an uplift more than even Dev Anand's face does. ■

Dharmendra: foolhardy



*A tongue-in-cheek account by a foreign
correspondent of the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan
from a stranger-than-fiction listening post*



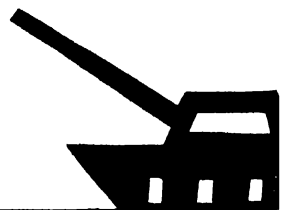
THE AFGHAN TRAIL

We took a shellacking in Nam. The Ayatollah handed us our hat. Congress put the fix in, and we had to take a dive in Nicaragua. We got our clock cleaned in Lebanon. And everybody laughed at us for picking on Grenada.

But that was then, and this is now. The USA is back, kicking butt and taking names. We went head-to-head with all the commie Russians in the world, right in their own backyard, and sent them home, tail 'twixt knees. And we did this with clearheaded policy objectives, guts, determination and just a little help from 6 million dead, maimed and displaced Afghans.

Yes, this is war as it was meant to be—not a single American fired a shot. And as the 15 February deadline for the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan approached, I went to do war correspondence as it was meant to be—without hearing a single shot fired.

I had a visa to go into Kabul and sit with the freshly abandoned Najibullah regime, waiting for the *mujahedeen* to descend on the city like Christmas shoppers on Macy's, if Macy's had two-for-one, slit-throat sales. But, I thought, who wants to read about misery, hunger and fear? Especially my misery, hunger and fear? Heck, we won this one. This should be an upbeat story. Besides, my girlfriend said that if I went to Kabul and started telexing back "Sorry, honey, I'm besieged" excuses and left her with the mortgage and the car payments and the driveway to shovel, she would personally kill me, in case the Afghans didn't. So I opted to go to Peshawar, in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, because Peshawar is the principal "listening post" of the Afghan war, and "listening post" is journalist talk for "place that's



nowhere near anything dangerous and has bottled water."

(NB: Has anyone ever considered the American Girlfriend Plan for World Peace? What you do is give every important world leader an American girlfriend. For instance, there never would have been a Pearl Harbor. "Now, you listen to me, Hideki Tojo. If you think you're going off to bomb Hawaii and leave me here all by myself, you've got another thing coming. Mr Big Shot Japanese Warlord!" I'm sure it would work.)

Not that there wasn't action in Pakistan. There was plenty of shooting and killing. It just didn't have anything to do with the collapse of the Brezhnev Doctrine or with freedom and self-determination for the peoples of Central Asia. It was literary criticism. The locals were busy debating the merits of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*. And their arguments were livelier than anything between Lillian Hellman and Mary McCarthy in *The New York Review of Books*. On 12 February, 6 people were killed and 127 injured in a riot in front of the American Cultural Centre in Islamabad. Rushdie is a native of India with British citizenship whose book was published by an English corporation, so naturally the demonstrations were directed at the United States.

An account of the fracas, published in Peshawar's English-language newspaper, *The Frontier Post*, exhibited a pellucid style and a fecund imagination worthy of the great Rushdie himself:

...Swirling thick smoke by incessant shelling polluted the entire area making the breathing difficult. The protesting crowd, which was unprecedented in the history of Islamabad, was dispersed by the police firing, only to assemble again with a gap of five minutes....It took the emergency teams several hours to collect the injured and mutilated dead bodies...Several ambulances with wailing sirens made the scene horrible, as they streaked past the American Centre to fetch the injured....A group of young demonstrators pelted stones at the artistically designed building, smashing window panes and neon sign of the Center badly....The protesting crowd went wild following the news that most of their fellows were shot dead....The trouble was the worst in the history of Pakistan....

That means, as far as *The Frontier Post* was concerned, that the Salman Rushdie brouhaha was worse than the communal violence attendant on Pakistan's 1947 Partition from India, which



• Afghan army tanks on the outskirts of Kabul and (below) women and children queue up outside a bakery; abandoned by the commie Russians



killed half a million people, and certainly a graver matter than some dumb war in Afghanistan, a whole 56 km away. On 15 February, *The Frontier Post* carried 142 column inches of Rushdie argle-bargle and one five-line paragraph about the Soviets' last post in Kabul. A couple days later, Edward Girardet, correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor*, came out of Afghanistan after spending a week with the *mujahedeen* guerrillas. He'd been walking for hours, and when he finally got across the border into the relative safety of the North-West Frontier tribal areas, he sat down to write a few notes. Moments later he was being held at gunpoint, surrounded by Pathan tribesmen who were convinced he was Salman Rushdie and were ready to collect the \$5 million price on his head. It was clear enough to the Pathans. Salman Rushdie's a foreigner. Salman Rushdie's

a writer. And here was a writing foreigner.

Sneer at the "mysteries of the East", if you will. Not I. Here I was covering a war that we'd won without being in it, from a war zone where the principal danger to life and limb was from the use of magic realism in fiction.

The other principal danger was traffic. I'd rather hand out free copies of *The Satanic Verses* in downtown Tehran than ever again drive the 175 km on the Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar to Islamabad. This is the famous alimentary canal of the Indian subcontinent, the same Grand Trunk Road upon which Kim and the Teshoo Lama set forth in the Kipling story, except if they tried it nowadays, they'd be squashed to falfel in traffic, and *Kim* would be a much shorter book.

Everything imaginable, and too much

of it, is on the Grand Trunk—legions of people, pariah dogs, bicycles and crippled beggars dodging between thousands of unmuffled tricycle Vespa rickshaws with canvas sides covered in Rambo movie posters and thousands more five-ton Bedford trucks with ten-foot-tall, home-built wooden cabs containing entire clans of mad Afghans, so many of them jammed in there that no one's sure who's got a hold of the steering wheel. And there are maniac-driven "flying coach" buses, each decorated like an entire Haight-Ashbury, and Toyota Land Cruisers filled with armed *mujahedeen*, huge UN food-relief tractor-trailers, nasty little locally built Suzuki cars aflutter with black rags to ward off the "envious eye", stolen Soviet jeeps, motorcycles with four people on the seat, pickups with 40 people in the bed, taxis from the taxi-stands of hell and horse carts, pony carts, donkey carts, bullock carts and teams of oxen, herds of sheep, droves of cattle, buggerloads of goats, plus camel caravans as realistic as the ones in *National Geographic* and bundled-up couples riding on asses, looking like Joseph and Mary searching for a crèche to dump the baby Jesus in, not to mention the occasional shiny Mercedes sedan. Every one of these, crippled beggars included, is going as fast as he or it can, straight at everything else—on pavement no wider than a living-room couch. Nobody passes on the G.T. Road until he's sure there's something coming in the other lane. And this is not that kind of ditzzy, comic-opera bad driving they have in Italy, where everything misses disaster at the last moment by centimetres. These fellows just smash head-on or flip into irrigation ditches or plunge down mountainsides, so that there is vehicular carnage everywhere, each wreck eliciting a merry laugh from my driver, whose conversation was pretty much limited to "Ho! Ho! Ho! Many dead!"

"Gosh," I said, "this is more dangerous than the war in Afghanistan."

"Yes!" said my driver with enthusiasm. "And is best at night!" Which, returning from Islamabad to Peshawar, turned out to be true. It was exactly the same as travelling in the daytime, except everybody was engaged in the Pakistan National Competition to See Who'd Turn His Headlights On Last. We placed about third.

I'd gone to Islamabad to see that one thing without which no modern military campaign can be conducted—a press conference. All the leaders of the anti-Soviet Afghan alliance—the seven offi-



• (Clockwise from below) A homeless Afghan family; one of Peshawar's bizarre bazaars: anything from a wife to an AK-47 on sale; and, an Afghan soldier takes off his boots to pray before a mosque: inside liberated Afghanistan



cially recognised *mujahedeen* political parties, which, despite being called the Alliance, hate one another—were gathered at an Islamabad conference centre. There the *muj* were declaring themselves the winners of the war and electing themselves to the provisional government. Keen-eyed observers will

note that this declaration of victory in Afghanistan and election of government for Afghanistan were taking place in Pakistan. That way, the totally defeated forces of the Russian-backed Najibullah regime wouldn't be able to blast the utterly victorious forces of the American-backed *mujahedeen* to pieces with air strikes and artillery.

The Alliance get-together took the form of a tribal confab, or *shura*, an ancient tradition of the Pathan peoples, who make up the majority of the population in Afghanistan. To judge from the amount of empty posturing, double-crossing, back-room deal cutting and issuance of windy pronouncements, a *shura* is an ancient tradition the Pathans inherited from the John Tower confirmation hearings in the US Senate. In matters of political savvy, the *muj* are ready for Roger Ailes and Lee Atwater. For instance, absolutely no information was divulged at the press conference, especially not to the press. It turned out the purpose of the press conference was to

**Everything imaginable,
and too much of it, is
on the Grand Trunk:
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Vespa rickshaws**

bawl out reporters for reporting the amount of empty posturing double-crossing, back-room deal cutting and issuance of windy pronouncements at the *shura*.

"You've put the world to worrying," scolded *shura* spokes*muj* Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, a big affable-faced radical-fundamentalist xenophobe with a beard you could hatch a California condor in.



"Journalists should not do divisive things." He then cited an Afghan proverb about "trying to find hair in a bowl of dough"—as apt a description of the profession of journalism as I've heard lately. Interesting, seeing spin control from guys dressed in pajamas with tablecloths wrapped around their heads and bandoleers of ammunition across their chests and almost as many guns as wives. Other aspects of the *mujahedeen* world view, however, aren't so familiar. "One thing the *shura* must do," we were told at the press conference, "is decide the fate of the one and a half million martyrs in Afghanistan." I'm not sure I even want to know what that means.

During the Q & A period, each foreign reporter was given a media kit containing, among other things, one booklet in Dari, a language understood by none of the foreign reporters; one business card in Pushto, another language understood by none of the foreign reporters; one business card in English giving the times

and frequencies of *mujahedeen* radio broadcasts in Dari and Pushto; one pocket-knife; one lapel button bearing the symbol of the Alliance, which is a whole bunch of hands clasping one another in pregame high-school-basketball-team fashion and which bears an eerie resemblance to the seven-headed-cobra symbol of Patty Hearst's Symbionese Liberation Army; two



match-books with colourful art depicting Russians being stabbed, Russians with fangs, Russians being stepped on and a Russian bear getting stuffed into a bottle; and one genuine, adjustable Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahedeen Alliance ring.

The ring was not, unfortunately, of the decoder variety.

"But," I hear you ask, "how can I tell these seven *mujahedeen* political parties apart? And what about the eight smaller *mujahedeen* parties that are sometimes aligned with the other seven but sometimes not, because the seven larger parties are Sunni Moslems, who believe in killing communists and Zionists and Salman Rushdie, while the eight smaller parties are Shiite Moslems, who believe in killing everybody, including themselves? Furthermore, how can I get the inside poop on the many other minor factions and groups, some with extensive support inside Afghanistan, groups that are rarely if ever discussed in the press because you reporters are confused and exhausted enough from sorting through the 15 parties you know about already and wish we readers would shut up and go back to browsing through *People*?"

I'm glad you asked that.

Of course, hundreds of journalists had been sent to Peshawar. Our editors wanted us all to be on hand for the fall of Kabul, which the editors insisted would happen ten minutes after the 15 February Soviet pullout. Unfortunately, the editors had done their planning without consulting anyone but other editors, and therefore nobody in or

around Kabul knew the city was supposed to fall. The journalists were left chilling in the lobby of the Peshawar Pearl Continental Hotel—in a country where liquor is illegal and women are covered with tarpaulins and the only available excitement is getting injured in traffic accidents or having your beel rung by angry Moslem bookworms.

All the journalists could talk about was getting inside.

"I'm trying to get inside."

"I think I'll be getting inside soon."

"I can't seem to get inside."

"I was inside two months ago."

I remember the same conversation from the tenth grade, except it was about girls and brassieres. The very least the editors wanted, if Kabul wouldn't fall, was an 'inside Liberated Afghanistan's dateline. This meant the porters were supposed to go about ten yards up the Khyber Pass, wearing somebody's front-hall rug over their shoulders in the immortal manner of Dan Rather, still remembered in these parts as Gunga Dan. But there were too many Banana Republicans—as the old hacks called the newcomers—and the *muj* were heartily sick of the press in general. They'd already dragged enough flabby, whiny, chain-smoking infotainers through the slush, mud and rocket attacks. At this point, what was in it for them? They had their Stinger missiles.

• An Afghan army soldier carrying supplies



They'd seen the backs of the Russians. And every charity, humanitarian-aid and public-service organisation on earth, with the possible exception of the Animal Liberation Front, was coughing up succour and cash.

The bazaars of Peshawar's old city chronicle the history of mankind as K Mart. Everything ever made is on sale in a dirty puzzle of streets too narrow for a Seventies necktie and more crowded than a hockey brawl. There's Street of the Tinsmiths, Street of the Gold Sellers, Street of the Bird Sellers, Street of the Storytellers and a whole street lined with huge paintings of false teeth.

You can buy a new car, antibiotics, opium, a Russian refrigerator, a fax machine, a wife. The money-changers, squatting in a row on a stone shelf along the filthy Chowk Yadgar square, keep telephones behind their rolled-up prayer mats so they can call Hong Kong for the latest exchange prices. If you go 40 km south to the bazaar at Darra, in the so-called tribal areas (tribal areas are what the Pakistanis call the parts of Pakistan that Pakistan has no control over), you can buy a brand-new Moscow-issue AK-47, still in its shipping grease, an entire ack-ack gun, a shoulder-fired antitank missile or landing wheels off a shot-down MiG—useful, the locals say, for making a smooth-riding ox cart. At the tobacco stalls in Saddar bazaar, in the British colonial section of Peshawar, I held up a box of fancy Cuban cigarillos I'd bought in Europe. "Two days," said the tobacco seller, and two days later the cigars were there, costing less than they had cost in London.

The Old City is a paradise, albeit a smelly paradise, what with open sewers down the middle of the streets—and quite unlike any place else in Asia. There's only a modicum of begging, and that very dignified. There's no wheedling or importuning at all and never a flutter of street-urchin fingers in your wallet pocket. The only cheating is that ancient and reciprocal kind known as business. "An armed society is a polite society," Robert Heinlein has written.

I spent whole days in the Old City, sprawled on piles of carpets museumable for their age and beauty, wiggling my bare toes in silk-warp threads and drinking myself into a tizzy on dozens of cups of green tea, served so sweet that a Mars bar's worth of sugar lay in the bottom of every cup. Shopkeepers would bring out lapis from the Suliman Mountains, raw lumps of turquoise from the Himalayas, gold jewelry as soft as



• (Clockwise from left) A *buzkashi* game in progress; Central Asian bravery; heavily armed *mujahideens* claiming victory; a man with a sackful of banknotes in a crowded marketplace; any world currency is an easily available commodity



lead in its purity, coins bearing the profile of Darius III, Burmese rubies, emeralds from Kashmir and, once, an entire panoply of arms and chain mail from the Moguls who ruled before the Raj.

I suppose I should feel guilty for shopping when I should have been trudging through minefields or shivering in Kabul or at least hanging out at the *shura* in Islamabad playing Meet the Muj. But if you look around this part of the world, you realise there's nothing here *but* shopping. The Hindu Kush



mountain range—the Killer of Hindus—produces some runty livestock, and not much of that. Down on the plains are the same mud-fort houses that were here when the Aryan hordes arrived in 2000 BC—with Bronze Age version of swastikas and beer-hall songs. The peasants grow just enough wheat and rice to keep most of them alive some of the time. There's not even firewood. House walls are decorated with circular cowshit patties being dried in the sun for fuel. From the valley of the Indus to the plateau of Iran, from the Baluchistan desert to Samarkand, in the Soviet Union, absolutely fuck-all gets manufactured. And it's not a service economy. And it sure isn't a hotbed of ideas and intellect—adult literacy in Afghanistan is about 8 per cent. What makes this place important, what makes it exist at all, is shopping.

Actually, this has always been a great part of the world to stay out of. There are some things you ignore at your peril, but you pay attention to Central Asia at the risk of your life. The people who dominate these mountains, the Pathans and their urbanised cousins, are Caucasians, similar to ourselves in appearance and violent looniness.

The cuddle-toy nature of the Afghans is nowhere more evident than in their national sport, *buzkashi*, a kind of rugby on horseback played with a dead calf

instead of a ball. A *buzkashi* match is held in an ill-defined open space at least the size of a city block. Any number can play: there were about forty horsemen in the game I saw. The players are divided into two teams. The field has a flag at one end and three large circles chalked into the dirt at the other. The two outside circles are the goals for the respective teams, and the middle circle is where the calf is put after its head is chopped off. The point of *buzkashi* is to lean out of your saddle, grab the calf, ride like hell around the flag at the far end of the field and come back and make a veal drop in your team's circle. The twist is that *buzkashi* is played for cash prizes, and the money goes not to the team that scores but to the individual scorer. Therefore, everybody on the other team is trying to take the calf away from you, and so is everybody on your own team. *Buzkashi* says so much about Central Asian politics that reporters call going to a *buzkashi* match “being put on metaphor alert”.

Buzkashi horses have the kind of size and musculature that's usually cast in bronze and bolted to a plinth under a national hero. And *buzkashi* riders are what the Tuscan peasants saw in AD 452, when Attila the Hun was touring Italy. They gallop in full turbans, with quilted coats open to the belly, and wear delicately tooled boots with heels so high that they're impossible to walk in.

I went to have a look at the dead calf before the game started. I couldn't lift it with both hands, but these guys cock a leg around a saddle horn and whisk the carcass away like a lady's handbag. Then the real fun begins—part Mongol horde, part horse Cuisinart—with hooves and boots and whips and fists flying and the whole barbarian stampede riding headlong into the spectators.

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at the dead calf before
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Dignitaries watch *buzkashi* from a mud platform with rugs and awnings and boys to bring lemonade. But real *buzkashi* fans get right down on the field and mix it up with the crazed horseflesh.

I tried using a French photojournalist for protection, but he was too skinny to absorb the impact of a runaway horse, and I got a nasty fat lip off the back of his skull when his camera got mooshed into his face. People were trampled all over the place, and bodies were pitched in the air, and the crowd was laughing its pajamas off. It's all part of the terrible Central Asian bravery surplus. There's so much death around the place that I guess the idea is to die in the most interesting possible way—being a spectator at a *buzkashi* match or driving to Islamabad or whatever. It's either die or go shopping.

The *buzkashi* game was held at one of the largest of the Afghan refugee camps in honour of the US ambassador to Pakistan, Robert Oakley, and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was in Peshawar on what the consulate staff calls the Frontierland Tour. That is, the senator was trotted around for a “grip and grin” with the *muj*, given a quick peek at the border of Afghanistan and shown some items of local cultural interest.

Ambassador Oakley invited twenty or so journalists who were watching the match to come to the consulate for cocktails and an “impromptu briefing”.

I wasn't paying much attention to the briefing. After all, I'm not a real foreign correspondent. I was stretched out on a consulate sofa, sipping a cold beer and watching Senator Moynihan padding around in the front hall in bathrobe and bedroom slippers, giving every appearance of being completely lost.

“How come this particular US aid programme has been so astonishingly trouble free?” one of the real reporters wanted to know.

“The success of our military and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is the result of the United States not being intrusive,” said Oakley. “Unlike Vietnam, where Americans were doing everything everywhere.”

“Have any Americans gone inside with this humanitarian aid?” asked another real reporter.

“If we sent a flood of Americans in there,” said the ambassador, “we might muck it up.”

And that's why I took the next plane home. ■

Bizarre Bazaar by P.J. O'Rourke in *Rolling Stones*, 20 April, 1989.

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Culture shock

East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet. Especially if it is something to do with the songs of the eminent poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore and—hold your breath—break dance.

An odd combination, you might say. But in Calcutta anything is possible, as a recent event shows. An eminent Rabindra Sangeet exponent, Maya Sen, arrived at the Nimtala burning ghat in the city to sing at a function to mark the death



anniversary of the poet. Much to her consternation, she saw a group of people from a theatre troupe performing a break dance to the strains of the Tagore number, *Tomari Asime!* Naturally, she walked off in a huff, without even garlanding the statue of the poet. Who can really blame her if she suffered from a culture shock?

Record "attempt"

Want to get into the *Guinness Book of Records* without doing anything? Simple. Just lie down and relax—for as long as you can (read: years). At least that's what Godadiya Papu from Chitra village in Gujarat, is believed to have achieved. Mastaram, as he was better known, lay on a mattress for 28 years, a feat that drew the attention of the *Guinness* authorities.



The record apart, when someone just lies down for so long, people are bound to regard him as either a crank or a mischief-monger. And that's what the masses in his village thought. Some began to look upon him as a spy (this was during the Indo-Pak war of 1965); yet others thought that he was a holy man, though he would not accept anything from anyone.

His following increased, but he never had any disciple nor did he give any *mantra* to anyone. The masses built a temple near him but he never entered it.

Mastaram didn't live for long, though. He died last month on the mattress on which he had slept for so long.

Carry on, doc

If you are suffering from peptic ulcer or gastritis, try Dr V. K. Jain's wonder device: the gastro-endoscopic machine. This has brought about a revolution of sorts as far as treating gastric ailments is concerned.

The instrument can photograph the diseased elements of the stomach. Lesions can be recorded, biopsies can be taken, the organism can be identified and culture tests can be done: in just ten minutes, without an operation, the Delhi-based doctor finishes the entire ex-



ercise—without even anaesthesia. The test costs about Rs 700. The machine has even diagnosed cancer, albeit in its initial stages.

Dr Jain feels that gastritis is a common disease, whose treatment is based on reducing acid secretion. But the reduction of enzymes, acids and gastric juices result in indigestion and dyspepsia. Dr Jain feels that most patients who undergo the conventional therapeutic treatment end up with a repeat of ulcers and dyspepsia.

A different curfew

When you impose a curfew, it means that there is trouble in the area. But a village in Karnataka has been observing a curfew of a different kind once every three years to combat a problem of a different nature: disease.

On 1 August, the residents of Matuga, a village in Belgaum taluk, observed a self-imposed "curfew". Life



came to a complete halt in the hamlet. No one moved out of the village—nor did anyone enter it. Shops were closed and even farmers did not go to the fields.

The ritual, the villagers believe, will ward off ailments. But there is no recorded evidence to prove that their belief is well-founded.

THIS INDIA

● **MADRAS:** A packet of Tirupathi *laddus* held up an Indian Airlines flight bound for Bombay recently. The aircraft, with 192 passengers on board, was about to take off when the control tower received a telephone call from a man who said that a bomb had been planted on the plane. The passengers were then asked to disembark. A package was found in one of the overhead lockers but none was willing to pick it up. Finally, one of the ground staff garnered enough courage to remove the unclaimed packet which was found to contain *laddus* from Tirupathi's Venkateswara temple—*The Statesman* (Leena Sinha, Patna)

● **COCHIN:** Inclement weather notwithstanding, hundreds of devotees watched as a centuries-old banyan tree which was uprooted a month ago was "cremated" with full religious rites at Thrikalathur, 50 km from here, recently. The giant banyan tree, which was situated a few yards away from the eastern gate of a temple and was believed to have been consecrated by the sage Agastya, crashed to the ground on 27 June—*The Hindustan Times* (O.P. Bajaj, Jabalpur)

PRIZE RS 100 FOR THE ENTRY GIVEN FIRST

SUNDAY WEEK

BEGINNING 20 AUGUST 1989 BY AMRITLAL



ARIES (21 March—20 April)

Except for the health of your spouse which is likely to cause you some anxiety, this is going to be a particularly lucky week for you. Prospects for businessmen are bright. The professional front looks good too—steady progress, with promotion for the luckier ones. On the financial front speculators may do well, gambling may bring in excellent returns. Your enemies will be active.

Good dates: 20, 21 and 26

Lucky numbers: 4, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: North and East



TAURUS (21 April—20 May)

Problems on the business front may trouble you. However, your spirits will receive a boost from fresh business contacts you will be making this week. You will make considerable headway on the professional front. Your efforts may win the praise of your superiors. Things may not be too well at home. Friends and relatives will find themselves in trouble and come to you for advice.

Good dates: 21, 23 and 26

Lucky numbers: 6, 8 and 9

Favourable direction: South



GEMINI (21 May—20 June)

Speculators and gamblers, there is every chance that you will win the lottery prize you have been waiting for. Financial gains are in store for others. Exercise caution while dealing in property matters. Fairly good opportunities await you this week, forge ahead and success will be yours. A word of advice: do not let a member of the opposite sex interfere in your affairs.

Good dates: 20, 22 and 24

Lucky numbers: 1, 4 and 8

Favourable direction: West



CANCER (21 June—20 July)

A very hectic week lies ahead of you. You are, however, advised not to waste your time in bad company. Disappointments are in store for you but don't let this bother you. Romance will take a particularly happy turn. A word of advice: guard against deception, a 'friend' is out to deceive you. The health of your spouse may cause you some anxiety. Keep your temper under control. Letters may bring good news.

Good dates: 22, 24 and 26

Lucky numbers: 1, 5 and 6

Favourable direction: South-west



LEO (21 July—20 August)

An unexpected problem on the domestic front may crop up, which could bother you for some time. This is not the time to pin your hopes on members of the opposite sex, you will have to put up with a great deal of opposition from them. Problems on the professional front will continue to bother you this week, too. The financial front looks bleak.

Good dates: 23, 24 and 25

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: North



VIRGO (21 August—20 September)

This, unfortunately, is not a very favourable week for you. Personal problems will assume grave proportions and continue to worry you. On the professional front, you may not meet with much success. Despite your honest efforts, you are likely to come under criticism from your superiors. This is not the time to rely on your friends for support. A good week for romance.

Good dates: 20, 25 and 26

Lucky numbers: 2, 8 and 9

Favourable direction: East



LIBRA (21 September—20 October)

An excellent week for romance. Make full use of the chances that come your way and you will have a good time with your partner. Good fortune by way of financial gains and business expansion is forecast. A word of advice: be on your guard for your enemies are on the prowl. But do not be alarmed, for no harm will befall you. You may go out of town this week.

Good dates: 23, 25 and 26

Lucky numbers: 4, 5 and 6

Favourable direction: South-east



SCORPIO (21 October—20 November)

Speculators and gamblers, this week you will have to exercise extreme self-control. Risky ventures are likely to result in losses. On the professional front, progress will be steady provided you are tactful in dealing with your colleagues and superiors. Financial prosperity will continue to elude you. The domestic front will remain peaceful and your spouse will give you all the support that you need.

Good dates: 21, 23 and 25

Lucky numbers: 3, 4 and 9

Favourable direction: North-east



SAGITTARIUS (21 November—20 December)

Except for your health which shows signs of failing, this week will turn out to be moderately successful. For those in government service, a promotion is not unlikely. Excellent opportunities await those in business. This week you are likely to get a chance to mix with people and establish contacts with influential persons. On the financial front, you may do well.

Good dates: 22, 23 and 26

Lucky numbers: 1, 6 and 8

Favourable direction: West



CAPRICORN (21 December—20 January)

This, unfortunately, is not a very lucky week for you; businessmen are advised not to enter into new and risky ventures, others are advised to guard against extravagance. Your determination and will power will help you solve some of the problems facing you this week. Do not be unduly perturbed. Rely on your friends to give you support when you need it most.

Good dates: 21, 22 and 24

Lucky numbers: 7, 8 and 9

Favourable direction: South



AQUARIUS (21 January—20 February)

Financially, this is an excellent week. You will be in a position to spend at least quite a bit of money for a while. However, fresh loans may have to be undertaken primarily because a friend or a member of the family may ask you for financial assistance. A lucky break awaits you if you are a creative artist, so forge ahead and your efforts will be successful. A friendship is in the offing.

Good dates: 24, 25 and 26

Lucky numbers: 3, 6 and 9

Favourable direction: East



PISCES (21 February—20 March)

If you are the adventurous type, this is an ideal week for you. Surprises and excitement will keep you on tenterhooks. A lucky week for sportsmen too; your efforts will be crowned with success. For businessmen and those in service, this will turn out to be a moderately successful week. The domestic front will be a source of joy and comfort. Letters will bring you good news. A good week for trekkers.

Good dates: 20, 21 and 22

Lucky numbers: 1, 2 and 4

Favourable direction: North

Star Partners: Virgo—Leo

The Leo man is of an extravagant and generous nature. But this is something that the Virgo woman apparently doesn't like. On the other hand, his extravagance may only lead her to become more and more miserly. She may be unable to understand his lavishness.



M. Karunanidhi (left) with Rajinikanth: praising each other

Politics and cinema

Cinema and politics have been inseparable in Tamil Nadu for decades now. And chief minister M. Karunanidhi—himself a script-writer—realises the importance of one for the other full well. Karunanidhi rarely passes up an opportunity to attend social functions organised by Madras' dream merchants. Posters of him with some superstar or the other find their way to the city's walls ever so often.

The chief minister's favourite now appears to be Rajinikanth. On 6 August, Karunanidhi was present at a function to celebrate a 125-day run of the latest Rajinikanth starrer. His speech on the occasion was peppered with praise of the star's talents. The members of the Rajinikanth Fans Association were delighted. After all, it was not so long ago, when the late MGR was in power, that everything possible was done to harass the star. And supposedly all because MGR resented his friendship with a certain Tamil heroine. Rajinikanth himself is said to be delighted with Karunanidhi. He knows that in Tamil Nadu, cinema needs politics as much as politics needs cinema.



Sivaji Ganesan: unsuccessful

The star that failed

Southern film stars who have turned politicians have usually been very successful. They have attained as much popularity as leaders as screen idols. The only exception to this rule appears to be Sivaji Ganesan. The thespian has failed dismally in his role as a politician. After quitting the Congress(I) a couple of years ago, he floated his own party, the Tamizhaga Munnetra Munani (TMM). But the TMM fared miserably in the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections in January this year.

And that's not the end of Ganesan's problems. His tiny outfit is riven with dissension. While a section is all set

to return to the Congress fold, Ganesan is negotiating a merger with the Janata Dal. Maybe he'll have better luck in the Dal.

The winning duo

At a time when most Congress chief ministers are faced with intra-party dissidence, one man remains free from any such



J.B. Patnaik: free from dissidence

trouble—Orissa's J.B. Patnaik. The only alternative to the chief minister, it is said, is his wife Jayanti Patnaik. Mrs Patnaik, the Lok Sabha MP from Cuttack and president of the All India Mahila Congress, is becoming an increasingly powerful figure in the Congress' scheme of things. Recently, she organised the unveiling of a por-

trait of the late Harekrishna Mehtab—a function which every political name worth its salt, from the Prime Minister downwards, attended. Together, the Patnaiks have become a powerful team. Jayanti, it is believed, uses her influence in Delhi to ensure that the Centre doesn't consider having her husband replaced.

The search for seats

Union minister Buta Singh is a man in search of a constituency. Recently, he sent a team of his cronies to check out whether the Pandharpur seat in Maharashtra was a 'safe' one. He is considering Pandharpur because he believes he needs to change his seat if he wants to win. His present constituency, Jalore in Rajasthan, is said to be 'unsafe' now as the home minister rarely bothered to visit it after he was elected. Buta Singh also knows that he doesn't stand a chance in his home state of



Jayanti Patnaik: the ideal wife

Punjab.

Another senior Congressman who may have to change his constituency is the external affairs minister, P. Narasimha Rao. Rao was elected the last time around from Ramtek in Maharashtra because of similar reasons—with NTR's hold over Andhra Pradesh, he couldn't risk a contest in his home state. ■

Much ado about Puri

By itself, the resignation of columnist and cartoonist Rajinder Puri from the national executive of the Janata Dal is not of earth-shaking importance. But the manner in which the government-owned media played it up would lead one to believe that Puri was a political heavyweight. Doordarshan, for instance, had it as second lead in its English news broadcast. Moreover, it referred only to selected parts of Puri's resignation letter—the bits that were embarrassing to the Congress were conveniently left out. Yes, Puri did describe the Dal as a party where sycophancy thrives, but he also said it had got "too close to Congress culture for comfort". And he did say that he "sees no indication of the Janata Dal ever becoming an instrument of social change", but at the same time he predicted that it would win the next election. All editing is selective but this is not what textbooks for journalists have in mind.

Speaking out

Haryana strongman Devi Lal's relationship with Janata Dal president V.P. Singh has always had its ups

V.P. Singh (left): confused and Devi Lal: criticising the Raja openly



Rajinder Puri: unwarranted publicity

and downs. Right now it appears very down. Recently, during a meeting with newsmen at Lucknow's press club, Devi Lal criticised the Raja openly for the first time. The provocation was the contradictory statements that the Raja has been making on the Dal's attitude to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Lal said that V.P. Singh was changing his stance on the BJP every day and that this has led to considerable confusion among party workers.

Lal's courage to come out against the Raja could have something to do with Chandra Shekhar. It is believed that Shekhar and Lal—who fell out after teaming up sometime in February this year to have their men

elected to important party posts in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar—are back to being friends again. Lal's wily lieutenant, Sharad Yadav, is said to have effected the patch-up. It is perhaps no coincidence that Shekhar told the press in Chandigarh, on the same day that Lal spoke his mind, that "V.P. Singh is not my leader".

Of fables and men

It seems very far-fetched but it is believed by a number of politicians in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. The rumour goes that the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), T.N. Chaturvedi, is

planning to contest the Lok Sabha election from the Farrukhabad constituency in UP. An item in a local newspaper went as far as saying that he has accepted the Janata Dal's offer to be its candidate either in Farrukhabad or its adjoining constituency, Kannauj.

If the rumours have gained credence, it is because Farrukhabad, being a Brahmin-dominated constituency, is a plausible seat for someone like Chaturvedi to contest. Moreover, two Janata Dal leaders recently visited the constituency in order to "check it out". Could this

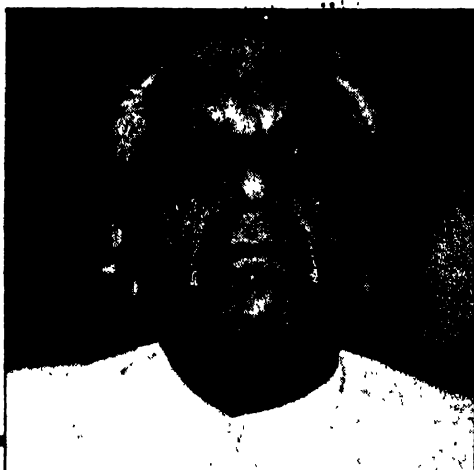


T.N. Chaturvedi: subject of speculation

have been done for Chaturvedi's sake? Perhaps, but the rumour is still somewhat difficult to believe.

Staying put

The All India Congress Committee (AICC-I) will have to wait until next year before it can move into its spanking new office. Sources within the AICC(I) say that although the new office, Jawahar Bhawan, will be inaugurated on Nehru's birthday on 14 November this year, it will be occupied only after the general election. "It takes at least a month to shift. And we don't want to 'destabilise' our office during the election," says an AICC(I) joint secretary.



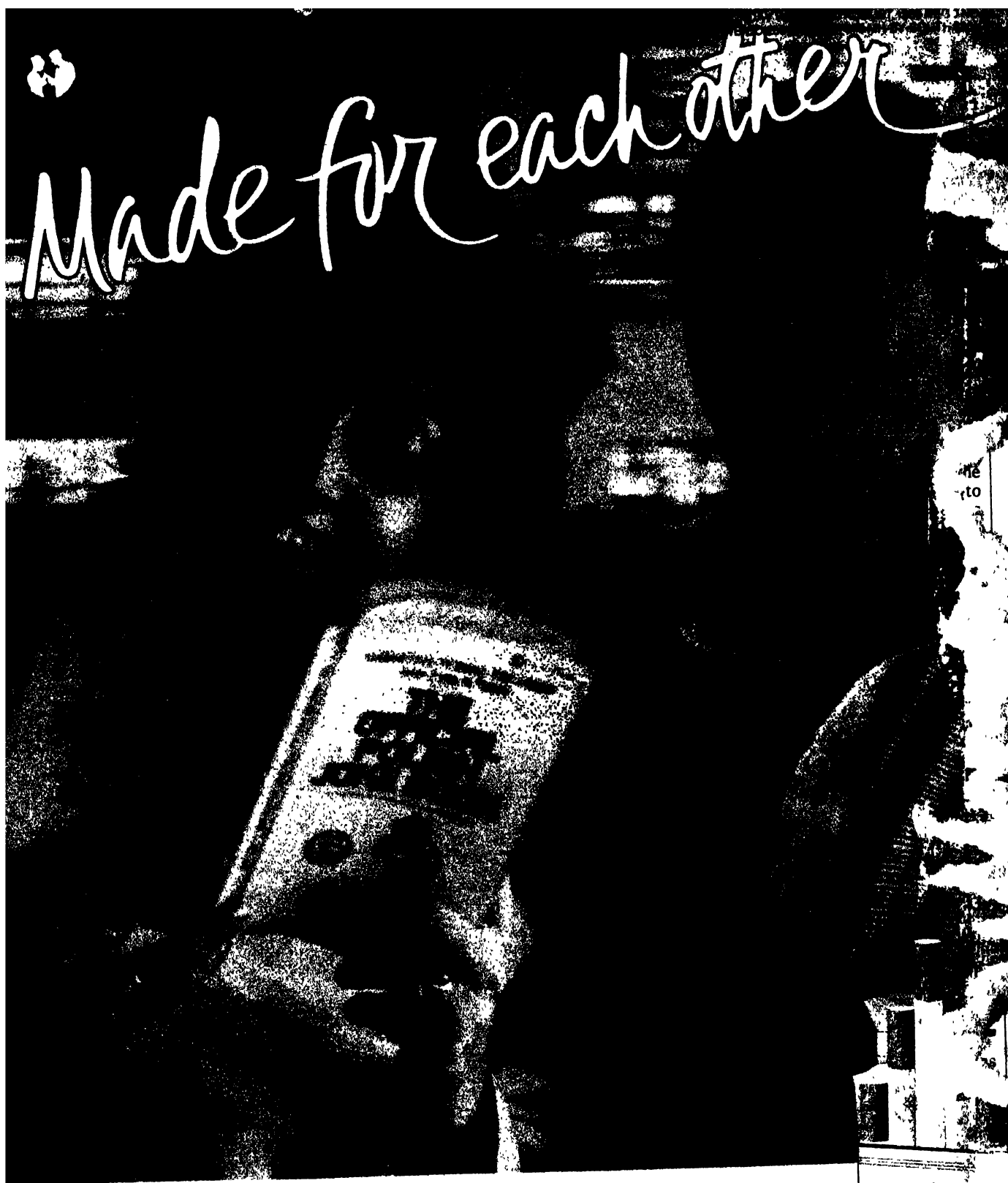
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